

Study in Documents

Memos and Minutes: Arnold Heeney, the Cabinet War Committee, and the Establishment of a Canadian Cabinet Secretariat During the Second World War

BRIAN MASSCHAELE*

RÉSUMÉ Le Cabinet fédéral canadien n'a pas créé ni maintenu d'archives telles que des procès-verbaux avant mars 1940, date à laquelle les responsabilités du greffier du Conseil privé furent alors amendées pour y inclure le secrétariat du Cabinet. Cela représentait un développement significatif dans le contexte de la longue tradition de secret entourant les délibérations du Cabinet. Cette décision fut prise, du moins à l'origine, à cause des circonstances particulières imposées par la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Le Cabinet avait besoin d'un système plus efficace de prise de décision et de communication de ses propres arrêts du fait de leur nature urgente. Le poste de secrétaire fut donc établi pour permettre d'acquiescer une documentation justificative, créer des ordres du jour, établir des procès-verbaux et donner suite aux décisions du Comité de la guerre du Cabinet (qui dans les faits se substitua au Cabinet au cours de la guerre). Arnold Heeney fut le premier à occuper ce nouveau poste de greffier du Conseil privé et de secrétaire du Cabinet. Heeney réussit à créer un secrétariat non partisan au service du Cabinet sur la foi d'un précédent britannique et nonobstant les réserves exprimées initialement par le premier ministre Mackenzie King. Cet article examine l'évolution du secrétariat du Cabinet et la gestion des documents qu'il développa au cours de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Cette information est ensuite utilisée pour éclairer encore davantage les témoignages qu'offrent les archives du Cabinet fédéral.

ABSTRACT Canada's federal cabinet did not create and maintain records such as minutes until March 1940, when the duties of the Clerk of the Privy Council were amended to include serving in a secretarial capacity to Cabinet. In the context of Cabinet's long tradition of in camera proceedings, this was a significant development. It was only adopted, at least initially, because of the peculiar circumstances brought on by the Second World War. Simply put, Cabinet needed a more efficient system of making and communicating its decisions because of their urgent nature. The position of Secretary to the Cabinet was thus established so that the Secretary could acquire supporting documentation, create agendas, maintain minutes, and follow up on decisions on behalf of the Cabinet War Committee (which for all intents and purposes replaced the Cabinet during the war). Arnold Heeney was the first person to occupy the amended position of Clerk of the Privy Council *and* Secretary to the Cabinet. Heeney successfully established a non-partisan secretariat to serve Cabinet basing it on a British precedent – all this despite initial reservations from Prime Minister Mackenzie King. This article examines the evolution of the Cabinet Secretariat and the record-keeping system that it put into place during the Second World War. It then uses this information to gain further insight into the evidence contained in these records.

It was not until March 1940 that Canada's federal Cabinet began to create and maintain official records of its actions. Prior to that time, the notion of Cabinet solidarity largely prohibited any attempt to create records such as minutes, agendas, and supporting documentation. Even in 1940, a formal record-keeping system was only accepted because of the peculiar circumstances of war. Cabinet, and in particular the Cabinet War Committee (CWC), which effectively took over from the full Cabinet in late 1939, needed a more efficient system of communicating and implementing decisions owing to their urgent character. Members of the committee needed as much information as possible before a meeting so that they could contribute more effectively and make faster decisions. They also needed a record of discussions for after the meeting in order to ensure that these decisions were properly implemented.

Arnold Heeney's appointment as Clerk of the Privy Council *and* Secretary to the Cabinet in March 1940 symbolized commitment to creating a new record-keeping system and providing practical support. From this point forward, the Privy Council Office (PCO) was not only responsible for drafting and implementing orders-in-council (which it had done since Confederation); it was also responsible for drafting agendas, providing supporting documentation, and taking minutes of Cabinet War Committee (CWC) meetings. Heeney was appointed to establish a system to create and control records for use by the committee. His service in this role continued through the war.

Researchers seeking evidence of the actions of Canada's federal Cabinet during the war have ultimately been the beneficiaries of the decision to improve Cabinet record-keeping. CWC records, located in Record Group 2, Records of the Privy Council Office of Canada (hereafter RG2), and held by the Government Archives and Records Disposition Division of the National Archives of Canada, have already been used extensively in a variety of publications and most likely will form the basis of many more. Not only do they record topics of discussion during CWC meetings, they also contain supporting documentation that helps to provide important contextual information relating to major decisions. In short, they are a rich source of information for anyone attempting to study the Canadian government's wartime policies. When coupled with the fact that they are well organized and accessible (there are now no access restrictions and they are microfilmed), it is no wonder that researchers have turned to these documents so often.

Although there are some published sources outlining the general rationale for the creation of a formal record-keeping system for CWC meetings,¹ a comprehensive study of the evolution, mandate, structure, and functions of the office that created these records has not yet been made. A study of this type is especially needed for CWC records, and indeed Cabinet records up until the present, because the rationale and procedures behind creating these documents has had a profound impact on their final form – so much so that one can only fully understand their contents by examining why and in what manner they

were created. Each type of document was created in order to serve a particular administrative purpose within the context of a compelling need for improved committee efficiency during a very difficult time. By examining the evolution of the Secretariat within the framework of Cabinet's need for better record-keeping, and the duties the new office performed, one is able to gain insights into the types of information found, and not found, within its records. For researchers, this ultimately reinforces their integrity as historical evidence, and makes it easier to determine what types of information to expect in each type of document. Archivists such as Terry Cook and Bill Russell have been successful previously in analyzing the environment that produced records of other federal offices and departments.² With such studies in mind, this article hopes to continue this success by examining, at a formative point in the federal government's history, one of its most important records-creating and controlling institutions: the Cabinet Secretariat, 1940–1945.

The impetus for a Canadian Cabinet secretariat came from a British precedent which was set during the First World War in circumstances very similar to those present in Canada in 1940. By 1902, Britain's conduct of the Boer War had been under heavy criticism, especially due to a lack of coordination between government departments and the military. Few records were kept and very little staff existed to communicate policy between London and soldiers in the field.³ To alleviate this problem, the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) was established late in 1902. Its role was to coordinate military policy within the broad framework of government policy. A secretary was appointed for the committee with responsibility to record and register decisions of the committee and communicate these to military and government departments. The content of minutes consisted of and documented conclusions reached by the committee.⁴ Supporting documents and memos exchanged by the committee and departments were indexed and organized into series according to subject.⁵ This was the first body of an executive nature in Britain to make a concerted effort to keep a record of its proceedings for the benefit of other departments.⁶

In March 1912, Maurice Hankey took over as Chief Secretary to the CID. His appointment proved to be a watershed in the development of a secretariat – consisting of a permanent secretary and supporting staff – serving not only the committee, but Cabinet as well. Hankey had come from a solid military background and had proven himself a worthy administrator in his four years as Assistant Secretary to the CID. He immediately established a records creation system to communicate military policy to government departments. These efforts culminated in 1913 with the creation of a "War Book" that specified actions to be taken by each department and Dominion in the event of war. The preparation of this book demonstrated the importance of a body that could keep track of communications between different parts of the government.⁷

When the First World War began, Hankey continued in a secretarial capac-

ity with the CID and its successor committees. Prime Minister Asquith would not, however, allow Hankey to act in this manner for Cabinet. Asquith considered this to conflict with “established constitutional doctrine and practice.”⁸ He argued that a record of Cabinet discussions would undermine the principle of Cabinet solidarity, by which members of Cabinet were to remain united in their support of decisions taken by the Cabinet, regardless of divisions that occurred behind closed doors. A record of deliberations, he felt, would compromise solidarity, as well as secrecy, if viewed by the wrong people.⁹ As it turned out, solidarity within Asquith’s government broke apart anyway. In December 1916, with Britain’s armies stalled in the mud of the Somme, David Lloyd George formed a new coalition government. This development also proved to be a turning point in the history of the Cabinet secretariat in both Britain and Canada.

Lloyd George created a new body, termed a “War Cabinet,” composed of members without departmental responsibilities. The War Cabinet essentially replaced the full Cabinet. This body had full executive authority, but was free from the entanglements of inter-departmental competition that had impeded previous Cabinets. Hankey was immediately appointed Secretary to the War Cabinet. Lloyd George felt that an important factor contributing to the ineffectiveness of Asquith’s Cabinet had been its failure to keep a formal record of decisions, the result being, as he later stated, “that now and again there was a good deal of doubt as to what Cabinet had actually determined on some particular issue.”¹⁰ This confusion could hardly be afforded in a time of war. Hankey’s appointment was therefore intended to implement a sound record-keeping system to avoid any such confusion.

Hankey’s duties as secretary were to record the proceedings of the War Cabinet, transmit relevant extracts from the meetings to departments, prepare the agenda paper, provide for the attendance of ministers, arrange for the attendance of others not in the War Cabinet to discuss particular items on the agenda, receive papers from departments, and circulate them to the War Cabinet and other officials.¹¹ In addition, the office was charged with reporting on the duties of Cabinet committees that were set up to look into specific issues.¹² The secretariat had a comprehensive mandate, especially considering that the British Cabinet had never before allowed a secretary to be involved directly in its affairs.

Hankey devised an elaborate system to provide Cabinet members with the necessary information to make and implement decisions efficiently, while still preserving secrecy. Members of the Cabinet and departmental officials forwarded suggestions for the agenda to Hankey’s office. A “waiting list” of topics for discussion was compiled and forwarded to the Prime Minister who then chose items for the final agenda. Prime ministerial control over the subjects to be discussed was thus preserved, while Cabinet members received advanced notice of the items scheduled for consideration, thereby allowing them to

bring a more informed opinion to bear on the issues. The agenda and relevant supporting documents were usually circulated the day prior to a meeting.¹³

Hankey was allowed to record meeting proceedings for the purpose of drafting minutes for the meeting, which were formally termed “conclusions.” According to Hankey, minutes were to provide a complete record of decisions, plus an indication as to the reasons for the action taken. As one assistant later pointed out: “The one injunction that Hankey burned upon our souls was that a minute [i.e., a conclusion] must always end with a definite decision.”¹⁴ Any contextual information was to remain strictly anonymous in order to preserve Cabinet solidarity. Distribution was governed with the utmost of secrecy. The King, members of the War Cabinet, senior ministers and chiefs of staff, as holders of keys, received the full conclusions, which were delivered in locked boxes by one of Hankey’s assistants.¹⁵ Other officials received much less: excerpts only, consisting of those portions of the minutes that affected them. In this way, decisions could be communicated quickly for implementation while still preserving Cabinet solidarity and secrecy.

An important feature of the secretariat was its non-partisanship. Hankey and his staff were less concerned with serving Cabinet members’ political interests than they were in promoting efficient operation of the machinery of government and the acquisition, creation, and distribution of information that could aid the government in carrying out its decisions. From the outset, Hankey indicated that the secretariat was “neither an Intelligence Department nor a General Staff” and that assistant secretaries, who were seconded from other departments during the war, were “to bear in mind that it is no part of their duties to do work which pertains to the Departments.”¹⁶ The development of policy and political strategies was the domain of Lloyd George’s own personal secretariat, commonly referred to as the “Garden Suburb” in reference to its location in the garden of numbers 10 and 11 Downing Street.¹⁷

John Naylor, who has written a comprehensive history of the British Cabinet Secretariat, argues that the Secretariat directly improved the administration of Britain’s war effort. The lack of record-keeping prior to the establishment of the Secretariat had essentially paralyzed the British war effort on the home front. Hankey rectified this situation by improving the communication links between the Cabinet and the departments in charge of implementing its decisions.¹⁸ King George V echoed these sentiments shortly after the war, saying that Hankey had contributed more than any other individual to the success of the war effort.¹⁹

Because the core functions and characteristics of the Canadian office were derived from the procedures laid down by Hankey in 1916, the story of the genesis of the British Cabinet Secretariat sheds light on its Canadian counterpart. In particular, the importance of non-partisanship in crafting sensitive Cabinet documents was not forgotten in later Canadian developments. “The creator of the modern Cabinet,” as Neville Chamberlain later termed Hankey

upon Hankey's retirement in 1938, had set quite a precedent for Arnold Heeney to follow.²⁰

Hankey's success led almost immediately to calls for a similar office in Canada. In 1919, the first concrete proposal was put forward for what was also called a "secretariat," that is, an office to create and control records on behalf of the Cabinet. The Special Committee on the Machinery of Government, chaired by John Stewart McLennan, was established to look into methods of administration within the government. The committee followed up on many of the issues raised in 1912 by the "Report on the Organization of the Public Service of Canada" by Sir George Murray, which also looked at ways of improving the transaction of government business.²¹ The committee was also significantly influenced by the findings of the Haldane Committee in Britain, which re-affirmed the need for a Cabinet secretariat to supervise execution of decisions of the British Cabinet.²²

In its report, the committee agreed with assertions raised in the Murray report that members of Cabinet in Canada were overburdened with matters of routine administration. Part of the solution, members felt, was to establish a secretariat. "It seems desirable that the administration abandon, as has been abandoned in the United Kingdom[,] the long established practice of keeping no record of Cabinet proceedings." The report went on to say that "the proper carrying on of business demands a proper organization which would include a staff to prepare for council meetings, expedite business at them, and promptly communicate the decisions in council to those concerned."²³ It then recommended a secretariat with duties similar to those established in Britain, with one notable exception. Under these proposals, the secretary would be officially non-partisan, but, by sitting on the Privy Council, would be active in the formation of policy.²⁴ This divergence from the British model would set the tone for later debates regarding the office.

Central to the argument of McLennan and his colleagues was the need to differentiate between the affairs of the Privy Council and the Cabinet. This distinction underlies many of the subsequent developments leading towards the creation of a Cabinet secretariat. W.E.D. Halliday, a former Registrar to the Cabinet and noted constitutional expert, in 1956 summarized the distinction between the two bodies:

Council is the body established by statute for the purpose of tendering advice to the Crown which, when approved, emerges as a formal instrument, the Order or Minute of Council, having full force and effect in law. Cabinet on the other hand is a body having no legal standing but deriving its authority and functions from unwritten conventions and practice. It is concerned with making policy decisions, which may require submissions to Council to implement and the issue of a formal instrument.²⁵

Cabinet, therefore, exists only as a body to debate government policy and has

no formal executive or constitutional authority, unlike the privy council, that has its powers defined under sections 9 and 11 of the *British North America Act*.²⁶

This distinction between the Council and Cabinet is often confused because both bodies share a common membership (at least among active members). Thus, Council and Cabinet business can take place during the course of the same meeting. Notably, members of Council are appointed for life whereas Cabinet members hold their office only during their party's term in office (in some cases for shorter periods if the Prime Minister asks them to step down).²⁷ In recent times, the full Privy Council has never met and, in fact, has no need to meet. For an order to be approved, it simply needs the approval of a quorum consisting of four privy councillors, a number easily achieved from among existing Cabinet members.²⁸

The dual nature of the central executive in Canada has a direct bearing on the establishment of a secretariat. Since Confederation, there has always been a secretariat for Council in the person of the Clerk of the Privy Council. This individual organized its affairs and was able to gauge its proceedings by those orders that had been deferred or approved during deliberations. Orders served as minutes in a sense because they provided a record of Council decisions. The clerk, however, served no function for Cabinet. Before ministers assembled for a meeting, which took place in the Privy Council chambers in the East Block of the Parliament Buildings, the clerk placed at the Prime Minister's chair a set of draft orders which had been prepared for consideration. The clerk withdrew once deliberations began. After the meeting, he returned to find the orders divided between the two compartments of a large wooden box at the Prime Minister's place. Those in the right hand side had been approved and were to be formally drafted and transmitted to Rideau Hall for the Governor General's signature; those in the left-hand side had been deferred or rejected.²⁹ The clerk thus had nothing more than remote contact with the Cabinet.

Unfortunately, the McLennan report achieved no progress in establishing a secretariat, at least in the short term. Reform of Cabinet procedure seemed less pressing as the country settled into a period of peace. In April 1927, Prime Minister Mackenzie King did have an item placed in the estimates for the Department of External Affairs providing for a salary for a "Secretary to the Prime Minister," an individual which he described to the House as "someone who can relieve him [the Prime Minister] to some extent of the work incidental to his office, and who will be in a position to deal, at least in part, with individuals on the Prime Minister's behalf."³⁰ Members of the official opposition, including leader R.B. Bennett, questioned the nature of the appointment and whether it would be politically partisan. King responded that he fully expected the individual to retire with the Prime Minister, thus implying that the Secretary would be considered to constitute political staff. He went on to say, however, that the post he was seeking was similar to that established by Hankey in Britain.³¹

These remarks reveal a significant contradiction in King's thinking about a secretariat. He believed that he was proposing an office similar to Hankey's but his proposal clearly differed in one crucial aspect – the issue of partisanship. The foundation of Hankey's office was its non-partisanship. If it is true that King patterned his proposal on the British model, then it seems that he had some rather large misconceptions about the nature of Hankey's duties. Hankey served Cabinet by providing administrative, not political support to its members. King's proposed appointee would serve the Prime Minister and his political objectives first and would serve Cabinet only as an extension of these duties. Clearly, as of 1927 there were some major obstacles to overcome if a true Cabinet secretariat based on the British model was to be established in Canada.

Nevertheless, King gained approval for the creation of the new office, much to his satisfaction.³² He next approached Burgon Bickersteth, warden of Hart House, University of Toronto, to broach the possibility of "building up a Cabinet office," with Bickersteth's participation.³³ Bickersteth considered the offer for several months, taking time to discuss it in detail with Hankey. Hankey expressed concerns over King's proposal, particularly the fact that the appointment would be partisan in nature. In the end, Bickersteth declined King's proposal, but only after he had sent the Prime Minister a memo on the nature of the office of secretary within the British Cabinet, perhaps in hopes of educating the prime minister of the need for future changes in approach.³⁴

With Bickersteth's rejection of the offer, the issue faded into obscurity. Prime Minister Bennett seemed to have little interest in the idea.³⁵ It was only when King returned to power in 1935 that the cause of appointing a secretary of some kind again surfaced. Late in the year, King became distressed over his workload. In his diary, he expressed the need for a personal assistant to relieve him of "the great burden" of his office.³⁶ Governor-General Tweedsmuir made several suggestions to ease King's concerns, the most notable of which was an endorsement of the plan for an executive assistant who would act as both a liaison with government departments and intelligence officer.³⁷

In 1936, King met Arnold Heeney, immediately expressing an interest in bringing the young lawyer into government service.³⁸ King was a close friend of Heeney's father and through this relationship had heard of Heeney's already impressive achievements. Heeney had initially attended the University of Manitoba. In 1922 he was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford, where he studied modern history. While at Oxford, he forged close relationships with such notable men as Norman Robertson and Graham Spry.³⁹ He went on to study law at McGill, graduating in 1931. He became very active in the Montreal Board of Trade and became heavily involved in educational reform in Quebec.⁴⁰

During the summers of 1936 and 1937, King socialized frequently with both Heeney and his father. On one occasion in 1937, King invited Heeney to

dine with him at Laurier House. During the course of their conversation, when asked if he had ever considered a career in the public service, Heeney responded positively. From this point on, King actively sought him out for the new position of "Principal Secretary" to the Prime Minister. In July 1938, Heeney received a letter from King asking him if he would be interested. He later observed: "It was this letter that was to effect a dramatic change on my life."⁴¹ King described the basic duties of the position as general supervision of the work of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), particularly acting as a liaison with other departments. In characterizing the prestige of the position, King compared it to that of Hankey's, saying that Heeney had a real opportunity to shape the position as Hankey had done. He went on to say that "where work is really important, it is the man who makes the position, not the position which makes the man."⁴²

Heeney was flattered with the offer, but did not immediately accept. He instead studied the proposal, focusing in particular on comparisons with the British model. On July 26, he drafted a memorandum for the Prime Minister entitled "The Nature of the Position and its Functions," in which he asked a series of questions about the post. The first of these simply asked: "Would the post be political?" He went on to say that in his opinion the position should be non-partisan: "If the occupant can, after a brief apprenticeship, perform the function of a secretary to the Cabinet, divorced from party politics, his office will tend in time to be regarded as an integral part of the permanent public service....He should therefore have no association with party whips, caucuses or officials of national or local party organizations."⁴³

Heeney detected very early on that there were major differences between King's proposal and the duties performed in Britain by Hankey. As he later observed, King's notion of the British secretariat was "vague and pretty far from the facts." He went on to say that King "had little abiding interest in the administrative process, in the machinery of government as such ... his primary, if unacknowledged, objective [in finding a secretary] was to enhance his authority as Prime Minister by strengthening the means of its exercise."⁴⁴ Heeney therefore immediately sought assurances that at some point, after a grace period in which he would prove his worth to the Prime Minister, he would become a full non-partisan Cabinet secretary like Hankey. He did not want to align himself too closely with the Liberal Party so early in his career in the public service. These concerns were laid to rest in August when, during a meeting with King and O.D. Skelton, Heeney was told that he would be made part of the permanent civil service prior to the calling of the next general election, either as Clerk of the Privy Council or First Secretary in the Department of External Affairs.⁴⁵

In late August, Heeney finally accepted the post of Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. In many ways, he accepted on the condition that it would lead to much bigger things. His foot was in the door and he could now hope to

effect change towards a true Cabinet secretariat from within. His acceptance letter boldly stated his ambitions in terms befitting his legal experience:

It will be the intention to develop in Canada the kind of post formerly held in the United Kingdom by Sir Maurice Hankey[,] namely that of Secretary to the Cabinet. While it is understood that such a position could not be brought into being all at once, this objective will be kept in mind and in the event of my proving suitable, the post will be created and I will be appointed.⁴⁶

Heeney began his duties as Principal Secretary on 1 October 1938. His basic responsibilities were to prepare the Prime Minister for Cabinet meetings and to liaise with departments and other governments on the Prime Minister's behalf. He also drafted the Prime Minister's press releases and speeches.⁴⁷ In carrying out these duties, he worked closely with J.W. Pickersgill, who had taken a position in the PMO several months earlier. Both would subsequently use their experience in the PMO to launch long and successful careers in the public service. They would also forge a friendship that would last the rest of Heeney's life.⁴⁸ Heeney was not allowed, however, to attend Cabinet meetings, nor did he perform a secretarial role for its meetings initially. Nevertheless, considering the slow pace of developments towards a secretariat since the McLennan Report of 1919, his appointment was distinct progress. The Prime Minister was at last taking steps towards better organizing his affairs, and by extension, those of the Cabinet as well.

Although Heeney's position as Principal Secretary required him to play an active role in King's daily affairs, he was nevertheless quick to remind the Prime Minister that this role extended only to official government business, not to the affairs of the Liberal Party. Heeney refused repeatedly to attend party functions, despite King's encouragement.⁴⁹ King's enthusiasm for a secretariat waned when he realized that the office could not be used for political advantage. Heeney addressed the issue of partisanship in August 1939 in a memo and subsequent meeting with the Prime Minister at Kingsmere. Pickersgill later described this meeting, reporting that Heeney:

invoked the written exchange between them, [the exchange that took place in August 1938] which clearly showed ... that his position as principal secretary was to be official and non-partisan and was to lead eventually to appointment as secretary to the Cabinet if such a position was established. The prime minister left no doubt that he resented Heeney's attitude but he realized he had to accept his decision or lose him altogether.⁵⁰

Fortunately for Heeney, King's attitude quickly changed when war started in September 1939. The need for more formal records creation and records-keeping procedures for Cabinet increased amid the unprecedented urgency of its business.

The affairs of Cabinet underwent a drastic reorganization in August 1939. With war inevitable, the Privy Council (and thus the Cabinet) essentially dissolved itself into six functional sub-committees to look into issues of supplies, legislation, public information, finance, and internal security. The overall structure was governed by a new body, called the "Emergency Council," which received reports from these committees and coordinated government activities. It was composed of six senior Cabinet ministers, including the Prime Minister as chair.⁵¹

This structure remained in place until December 1939 when the aforementioned sub-committees of Privy Council were replaced with nine new committees of Cabinet.⁵² This change provided for a more accurate description of their role, in which the emphasis was more on discussing the issues at hand and making sound decisions (the role of Cabinet) rather than simply passing orders (the Privy Council role). The Cabinet War Committee (CWC) took the place of the Emergency Council at the top of this new structure. For most of the war, it was composed of ten senior ministers with the Prime Minister as chair.⁵³ It considered the reports of the other nine committees and made recommendations on high-level policies. In effect, it replaced the full Cabinet during the war.

In developing the CWC's mandate, the need for information, regardless of source, was particularly stressed so that the CWC would have the background it needed to make proper decisions.⁵⁴ The committee could not afford to operate in a vacuum. It was also understood, however, that its members could not be expected to be informed about every aspect of the war's prosecution. It therefore became necessary to have a mechanism in place to ensure that information was being gathered, organized, and disseminated between the committee and other parts of the government on a "need-to-know" basis as quickly and as accurately as possible. Hence the need for a Cabinet secretariat.

Heeney was left very much in limbo in the early stages of the war, largely because the government itself was going through a period of instability due to all of the aforementioned changes in its structure. He continued to help prepare the Prime Minister for committee meetings, just as he had previously helped him prepare for Cabinet meetings. However, he still exercised no formal duties on behalf of the various committees – a situation which made him generally frustrated about his future status within the civil service. He later commented on the situation prior to 1940: "I found it quite shattering to discover that the highest committee in the land had neither agenda nor minutes. And the more I learned about Cabinet practice the more difficult it was to understand how such a regime could function at all. In fact, of course, the Canadian situation before 1940 was the same as that which had existed in Britain prior to 1916."⁵⁵

King, however, still had reservations about violating the firm secrecy of committee proceedings by creating some sort of record of those proceedings,

particularly when the keeper of that record insisted on maintaining his non-partisanship. In King's mind, this was a Liberal war. Despite the hysteria developing in the spring of 1940, he rejected calls for a "National Government." He viewed any attempt to share information outside of the CWC with suspicion at the best of times, and outright contempt at others. He was adamantly opposed, for instance, to any Conservative participation in the committee (or at least to full participation, instead offering them only two associate memberships in the committee in the spring of 1940, which they rejected outright).⁵⁶ From this perspective, it is easy to understand why King continued to approach the idea of a secretariat, which had as its main function the creation, care and control of records, with some caution. Heeneey later recalled in his autobiography that "instinctively Mackenzie King recoiled from efforts to formalize the business of Cabinet, an institution whose genius, historically and in his own experience, had been its flexibility and informality."⁵⁷

O.D. Skelton finally convinced King of the need to establish a secretariat. With several pressing issues facing the CWC in the spring of 1940 such as the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (which required immense coordination among many different parts of the government), Skelton lobbied King to appoint Heeneey to the post. Skelton was King's most trusted political advisor and arguably the most influential civil servant Canada has ever had. (Jack Granatstein has said that "Skelton changed Ottawa; he and his recruits changed Canada.")⁵⁸ Skelton had a great deal of respect for Heeneey. He set out to devise a plan to revise the duties of the Clerk of the Privy Council to include a secretarial function for Cabinet. In a sense the clerk already kept minutes of council through orders-in-council. It was only natural, therefore, that these secretarial duties be extended to Cabinet as well. Indeed, the extension of the duties of the Clerk of the Privy Council to include a non-partisan secretarial function for Cabinet, or in this case the CWC, was in effect a recognition that Canada's central federal executive served a dual function as both Privy Council and Cabinet.⁵⁹ When E.J. Lemaire, the clerk at the time, announced his retirement at the end of 1939, Skelton saw the opportunity to amend the duties of the clerk's office to include a secretarial function for Cabinet.⁶⁰

Among the benefits of this plan was that it allowed the secretariat to come into being quickly during a period when time was of the essence. Heeneey later observed that the CWC was already experiencing difficulties in implementing its decisions because of inadequate record-keeping.⁶¹ Negotiations in the fall of 1939 for the air training plan were a case in point. According to Heeneey, the process had been filled with delays, difficulties, and misunderstandings.⁶² Enhancing the clerk's duties served to reinforce the notion that the job was – as it still is – the most senior office in the civil service.⁶³ This was important in gaining the respect of ministers and other senior officials, especially considering that the office's incumbent needed their cooperation to succeed.

King's decision to call an election for 26 March 1940 forced him to deliver

upon his promise to grant Heeney a permanent position in the civil service. Heeney personally prepared the order appointing him as Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet four days prior to the election. This was subsequently approved by Council three days later as P.C. 1121. King was somewhat irritated that the order emphasized Heeney's non-partisanship in assuming the office: "It bears out a certain conception which he had at the time of his entering the service as secretary, [that] party politics is something with which it is not well to have oneself too closely identified. Quite clearly he is seeking to base his emphasis on his legal qualifications rather than his political ones whereas the latter are certainly, in his position, the most important."⁶⁴

Heeney would certainly have disagreed with this assertion. He was unbending in his desire to implement a secretariat as close to the British model as possible, a model which had as its most important attribute its non-partisanship. He was successful, for instance, at disassociating himself from King during the election campaign of 1940 in order to avoid any suspicion of partisanship.⁶⁵ His efforts to become a "Canadian Hankey" had finally paid off. The Canadian Cabinet Secretariat mirrored its British counterpart in that it played a role in the administration of executive meetings before and after they were held.

His triumph did not go unnoticed. The *Montreal Gazette* said of his new role with the CWC that "Mr. Heeney will be breaking new ground in the administrative system of this country."⁶⁶ The *Financial Post* also saw the development as significant, saying that Heeney was appointed "in the hope of achieving an important change in the machinery of government at Ottawa."⁶⁷ After a long evolutionary process, a Cabinet Secretariat was finally a reality in March 1940.

Heeney's first official meeting as secretary to the CWC took place on 3 April 1940.⁶⁸ Among his first actions was to assemble a staff for the secretariat beyond that already in place for the PCO. Throughout the war, he was assisted by as many as ten senior officers, most of whom were on loan from other senior departments.⁶⁹ In choosing these men, he looked for what he called "generalists" or men with historical and economic training rather than technical expertise. Such men, he felt, were better able to adapt to a variety of tasks. Each was assigned responsibilities to deal with a particular subject matter regardless of where this took them in the government structure, as opposed to being assigned to a particular committee.⁷⁰ This was very much in keeping with the approach Hankey used in Britain. It ensured that all officers were in touch with the entire machine, which thus made it easier for someone to take over in Heeney's position should the need arise. These officers worked out of a small map room in the East Block, close to the Privy Council chamber.⁷¹ In addition, Heeney had a clerical staff of between twenty and thirty people during the war, though a modest number compared to the 344 employed by the British secretariat at that time.⁷²

Many of the procedures that Heeney used for the creation and maintenance of committee documents were established in consultation with the British secretariat. As mentioned previously, he was already quite knowledgeable about the inner workings of the British office during Hankey's tenure. By the time the Second World War began, Hankey had retired. In his place were two secretaries, Edward Bridges and Norman Brook. Bridges and Brook immediately gave Heeney and other members of the PCO access to a large amount of confidential information about the British office. (They continued to do so throughout the war;⁷³ Heeney later noted that in setting up the office, "we even received the benediction of Hankey himself.")⁷⁴

In preparing for a committee meeting, Heeney's first challenge was to create the agenda and secure proper documentation to support the discussion of items. Immediately upon his appointment as Secretary, King began allowing Heeney to draft agendas, but did not permit these to be circulated in advance of meetings. King chose instead to keep agendas to himself until meetings started in order to exercise a stronger measure of control over the course of discussions.⁷⁵ Finally, in October 1941 Heeney's prodding, and departmental pressure to have more notice as to when items would be discussed (thereby giving departments time to prepare supporting documents), forced King to approve advanced circulation of agendas for all meetings. He retained the unilateral right, however, to make last minute changes to proposed topics.⁷⁶

A review of agendas created for CWC meetings points to three types of documents being used, each of which represents a distinct phase in the process of preparing for a meeting.⁷⁷ The first type of agenda document was called "Items for Consideration." This was a master list of items that could be discussed at any CWC meeting, or at any of the other committee meetings. Additional topics were added to the list at the suggestion of senior departmental officials.⁷⁸ Although most of these items were handled without ever going to committee, the existence of the list nonetheless helped the secretariat to keep track of departmental concerns, which helped to build a healthy relationship between the secretariat and departments.

The second type of agenda document was the "Provisional Agenda." As the name implies, this document contained proposed items that still required formal approval before being brought to the CWC. It was drawn up the day before a CWC meeting and was distributed to all members, often with a covering letter stating the exact time and place of the meeting.⁷⁹ (Meetings were usually held in the Privy Council Chamber in the East Block in the early evening.) Ministerial requests for changes to the provisional agenda were sent back to the secretariat the same day it was circulated. The requests were reviewed later the same day by both Heeney and the Prime Minister for final approval or rejection.⁸⁰

The establishment of a provisional agenda was an important element in the systemization of committee meetings. This assertion is supported by an appeal

Heenev made to CWC members in October 1940. In order to expedite the committee's business he asked members to inform him in writing as soon as possible of any matters they wanted brought up to the committee.⁸¹ The response seems to have been immediate. Beginning in October 1940, committee agenda files are full of correspondence from ministers or their private secretaries giving advance notice of subjects they wished to discuss at the next meeting.⁸² Heenev also seems to have succeeded in gaining advance notice from ministers of any absences from meetings, thereby enabling his staff to circulate a list of ministers expected at each meeting.⁸³

The third agenda document, the actual agenda, was drawn up hours before a committee meeting, after King had given final approval to all topics. After October 1941, an attempt was made to circulate the final version to ministers beforehand. If time permitted, Heenev also issued a letter reminding ministers to bring any supporting documents needed for the meeting.⁸⁴

The agenda for the committee meeting of 2 October 1941 is typical. The business at hand during this meeting represented the standard diversity of issues considered at any meeting. In this meeting, issues ranged from reports on the Canadian Military Mission in Washington, to discussion of medical supplies for Russia, to reports from each branch of the armed forces. This agenda was distributed to members hours before the meeting. Consequently, the twenty items it contained had already received the Prime Minister's approval for discussion. The word "secret" appears in the top left corner of the document. All committee documents were classified as secret, most secret, or confidential.⁸⁵ Occasionally, documents were not classified at all. The differences among these classifications, and what their occasional absence meant, is not immediately apparent given that all committee documents were guarded with a measure of secrecy. However, it does seem that correspondence with the committee was generally considered confidential, whereas minutes and agendas were seen as secret or most secret.⁸⁶

The agenda was a highly structured document. Rarely, if ever, did it exceed one page.⁸⁷ Items relating to external affairs were usually listed first. (These issues were of particular importance to the Prime Minister as Secretary of State for External Affairs.) After the establishment of the Permanent Joint Board of Defence in August 1940, its reports were included as regular agenda items.⁸⁸ Subsequent items related to matters of defence. A section of the agenda was reserved for discussion of general defence, as well as others for each branch of the armed forces. Beginning in June 1942, the Chiefs of Staff were allowed to attend the first and third meetings of each month. Further space was thus reserved to enable them to make personal reports and answer any questions.⁸⁹ The appointment of Major-General M.A. Pope as Military Secretary in 1944 regimented the agenda even further, as he was also called upon to make regular reports.⁹⁰ On the whole, then, the agenda for each meeting was drafted within a consistent framework. Certain matters had to be dis-

cussed at every meeting. Ministers could suggest specific items for discussion if they fell within this framework. Outside of this framework, however, there was very little latitude left to suggest other items of business.

A noteworthy characteristic of the agenda from 2 October 1941 is the presence of check marks down its left margin. These represented items that were actually discussed during the meeting. Of the twenty original items on the agenda, only fourteen were actually considered by the committee. For instance, an item pertaining to the provision of aircraft to the United Kingdom was not discussed. The order in which the fourteen items appeared on the agenda was not strictly followed for purposes of discussion.⁹¹ This was not uncommon. A source of continuing frustration for Heeney was King's aversion to sticking to the agenda, even after he had approved it and it had been circulated.⁹² His frustration was certainly justified, considering all of the steps that went into drafting the final version of the agenda.

Preparation for a committee meeting also involved acquiring and selecting supporting documents. These documents helped to provide context for discussions. The number of memos, letters, telegrams, and other types of communications received by committees and government departments during the course of the war was truly staggering, rising to heights inconceivable at any time previous. During 1940 alone, the Department of External Affairs handled over a million telegraphic messages.⁹³ This "information explosion" played a large part in the need for a secretariat. It also threatened to overwhelm the secretariat unless an organized system could be established to ensure essential information was being selected and brought to the committee's attention.

It was not until November 1941 that supporting documents were systematically saved and filed by the PCO, although they were already in use prior to that time.⁹⁴ Each selected document was assigned a number and filed sequentially along with the master file of committee minutes. This document number was often the only means of reference provided, particularly within the text of minutes. In total, 985 supporting documents were numbered and filed along with the minutes between November 1941 and the end of the war. These supporting documents – whether departmental reports or telegrams from Canada's diplomatic missions abroad – were often accompanied by explanatory memoranda prepared by the department responsible for the information, or by PCO staff in consultation with the departments. They were usually distributed with the provisional agenda, thereby giving ministers plenty of time for study.⁹⁵ Cabinet War Committee "Document No 1" of 4 November 1941, pertaining to "relations with Finland, Hungary and Roumania [sic]," (see front cover) has the words "circ. [circulated] with agenda, Nov. 4" written by Heeney on the top of the page, indicating that ministers had ample time to consider the document before attending the meeting.⁹⁶

Selection of the 985 supporting documents used and filed by the CWC required considerable cooperation with officials in other departments. Under-

Secretary of State for External Affairs, O.D. Skelton, and his successor, Norman Robertson brought many of the documents to Heeney's attention. Much of the committee's intelligence was supplied by the Department of External Affairs from its links with the Canadian High Commission in London, and both Skelton and Robertson alerted Heeney to key departmental documents, which were subsequently passed on to the committee. In fact, during their tenures, both men were allowed to regularly attend committee meetings, thereby enabling them to personally present much of the information.⁹⁷

Once supporting documents were acquired, an agenda created for a meeting, and the meeting had taken place, Heeney and his staff immediately began the task of drafting, editing, and circulating minutes. For the first time in Canada's history, the deliberations of the country's highest policy-making body were being recorded, to serve an administrative purpose. Considered in the context of traditional Cabinet procedure, with its emphasis on *in camera* discussions, this was a considerable change indeed. It was a change, however, that was long overdue, especially when one considers that as early as 1919 calls had been made for the maintenance of some sort of record of Cabinet discussions.⁹⁸

Committee members were accustomed to Heeney's presence during meetings. In fact, Heeney was even allowed to attend the first four meetings of the CWC in a non-official capacity prior to his appointment as Cabinet Secretary; he later drafted minutes for these meetings.⁹⁹ His appointment, however, allowed him to be much more aggressive in the maintenance and circulation of these documents. Heeney frequently used excerpts from minutes to communicate decisions to departments. The record became indispensable to the committee's deliberations – so much so that Heeney was often called upon to clarify points of discussion based on his knowledge of previous minutes.¹⁰⁰

The end of a meeting set off a torrent of activity within the secretariat. In a letter from Heeney to his father in December 1940 he described typical routine when drafting and finalizing minutes: "I have been dictating draft minutes ... all afternoon. Tomorrow they will be revised, sent to the Prime Minister, and letters written to ministers and others concerned in the decisions taken."¹⁰¹ After 1940, ministers were also allowed to suggest revisions, although these were considered only after King had finished editing the draft.¹⁰² Thorough editing of draft minutes assured the Prime Minister, and to some extent his ministers, of their right to be final arbiters of the record, although here King's word dominated – which was important considering the value he put on Cabinet solidarity. Thus, although King failed to create a partisan secretariat, he was at least able to exercise a measure of control over the records it created.

A guiding concern in distributing the final minutes was secrecy. Beginning in July 1940, all members of the CWC received a copy of the minutes. However, each was asked to return it immediately on reading it.¹⁰³ In some



Churchill and British Chiefs of Staff meet with the Canadian Cabinet War Committee, 15 September 1944. Arnold Heeney is seated to the left of Prime Minister Mackenzie King. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada [26930])

instances, requests could be made to the PCO to keep copies for up to three months. In fact officials within the PMO and office of the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs were allowed to keep a file of minutes for the duration of the war given their need during frequent discussions with other departments to consult decisions as recorded in the minutes. Otherwise, committee members' copies were destroyed after six months, with the exception of the PCO's master copy which was indexed and maintained in its central registry in the East Block.¹⁰⁴ Minutes of a typical committee meeting consisted of a cover page with anywhere from three to twelve pages of text attached. For reference purposes, each meeting was numbered consecutively. In total, 342 CWC meetings were numbered.¹⁰⁵

In distributing the full minutes, Heeney attached a cover letter highlighting items of particular interest to each minister.¹⁰⁶ Relevant excerpts were also forwarded to senior civil servants in each department with the following brief statement: "Since I [Heeney] last wrote you on [date], three meetings of the Cabinet War Committee have been held and the following matters have been recorded in the minutes."¹⁰⁷ These letters served two purposes. First, they ensured that decisions were communicated quickly to those in charge of

implementing them, often even before ministers had time to act. Secondly, they compensated for potential failures on the part of ministers to inform departments of any actions to be taken.

Heeney had a full time staff member charged throughout the entire period of the war with indexing the minutes.¹⁰⁸ The index was organized alphabetically by subjects such as countries, provinces, departments, heads of state, or specific policies. Beside each subject, the numbers of the meetings in which it was discussed were listed, along with other numbers which directed readers to the specific items within the minutes for the individual meetings. There was also an additional, extensive cross-referencing system. The index enabled Heeney to easily retrieve previous decisions on matters being considered by the committee and permitted him to intervene in committee meetings, as he occasionally did, when it appeared that a decision was in conflict with one made previously.¹⁰⁹ Beginning in January 1943, a "subjects discussed" page also appeared at the beginning of each meeting's minutes.¹¹⁰

Minutes always contained a list of committee members in attendance. Their place within this list most likely corresponded to their order of seating at the table. Mackenzie King, as chair, was always listed first. T.A. Crerar, Minister of Mines and Resources, assumed this duty in the Prime Minister's absence.¹¹¹ A separate section of the list was reserved for officials who were in attendance but were not members of the committee, including invited officials and Heeney himself. A glance at this section gives a good indication of the nature of business being discussed during the meeting. As a general rule, the invited officials only attended the portion of the meeting for which their presence was needed, a further reflection of the overwhelming concern for secrecy which guided committee deliberations at all times.¹¹²

Although it is difficult to summarize the broad range of items discussed during committee meetings, it is at least possible to identify certain themes in the minutes. Meetings for 1941, for instance, can be categorized in the following manner: thirty-four per cent of committee time was devoted to military matters, twenty-four per cent to international affairs, nineteen per cent to domestic matters, sixteen per cent to economics and finance, four per cent to labour, and three per cent to joint defence.¹¹³ These figures support C.P. Stacey's claim that the purview of the committee was "as wide as Canada itself."¹¹⁴

In most instances, the draft version of minutes required only minimal editing, if any at all, to bring it to its final form. On occasion, however, amendments to the original draft could be the topic of criticism and heated debate. Such was the case with the minutes for the committee meeting of 11 August 1943. This was by no means a typical meeting. It was a joint session with the British War Cabinet during the first Quebec Conference. Heeney was designated as secretary on behalf of both the committee and War Cabinet. Production of the final version of the minutes for the meeting proved to be an

exceptionally difficult process. Ralston took exception to Heeney's version of events as relayed in the draft minutes, writing to Heeney one week after the meeting to request a number of changes to the draft. In particular, he objected to being singled out in the minutes for his views on Canada's role in future military operations, his comments being introduced with the words "in Mr. Ralston's own opinion." This language, he said, "leave[s] an impression that I was only speaking personally which of course is incorrect ... I was speaking for and as a member of the committee." He went on to suggest that the offending phrase be replaced with new wording as follows: "our view was that for the reasons stated...."¹¹⁵ He resented being singled out in the minutes largely because of the impact it would have on Cabinet solidarity.

Heeney nonetheless resisted making these revisions, arguing that this meeting was unique and that Ralston's contributions to the meeting were significant enough to merit special attention. In a memo to the Prime Minister the following day, he proposed placing a note at the end of the minutes recording Ralston's suggestions rather than making changes to the original text itself.¹¹⁶ Mackenzie King seems to have approved this idea because, in fact, the changes are noted at the end of the minutes rather than in the main body of the text. Heeney generally identified any post-meeting additions to the minutes with an "x" next to the relevant point or occasionally with a handwritten note, not signing minutes until he was sure that no more changes were required to the final copy.¹¹⁷ His signature was therefore his seal of authenticity.

Heeney's concern for protecting the authenticity of original minutes was revealed in an exchange of correspondence with his British counterpart, Edward Bridges, in February 1942 in which Heeney asked Bridges several questions regarding the drafting of the final version of British War Cabinet minutes. Particularly, Heeney wanted to know what steps were taken to ensure the authenticity of minutes and if direct quotation was permitted.¹¹⁸ Bridges responded that Cabinet minutes were not circulated, meaning that a *draft* version was never created: the first copy was the final copy. Direct quotation was also not permitted in keeping with practice established by Hankey.¹¹⁹

Heeney's purpose in asking these questions was to determine the extent to which minutes of British Cabinet meetings reflected their actual proceedings. Heeney felt that Canadian minutes were much more detailed than their British counterparts, with a paragraph of context preceding any decision in the Canadian minutes.¹²⁰ Also, unlike in Britain, revisions that occurred after the Prime Minister had agreed to the draft version were noted in the text.¹²¹ Heeney's aggressiveness in providing at least a basic transcript of proceedings as he saw them became increasingly bold as the war progressed, especially considering that the secretariat's initial mandate was to record conclusions only. He seemed conscious of creating a record with at least some contextual information surrounding committee decisions.

King's general views towards the minutes changed as the war progressed.

From initially being very wary of Heeney's presence at meetings and the impact that this would have on deliberations, by November 1944 he was calling for an even fuller version of the minutes – or at least a version emphasizing his own particular views and opinions (complaining in his diary that Heeney was “far too often keeping out the vigour of my protests against courses being taken”).¹²² These comments lie in stark contrast to the concerns expressed by Ralston just a year earlier, and differ markedly from the opinions expressed by the Prime Minister when he reluctantly approved the mandate of the secretariat in 1940. Admittedly, this was a time of great division within the committee, as Ralston had resigned less than a month earlier over the conscription issue. However, as King's comments attest, during this episode at least, Heeney resisted recording matters of opinion in the minutes. And, in fact, the general rule seems to have been that the inclusion of opinions was avoided in the minutes, befitting the non-partisan role of the secretariat, except when minutes were going to be circulated to a wider audience which might need greater contextual information. (This was very rare.) The basic text of minutes largely remained unchanged between 1939 and 1945 in that they always emphasized decisions. Although Heeney tried to relay at least some context in the minutes, he did not want to alienate any of the ministers and thereby jeopardize the office.

The extent to which Heeney's personal views are reflected in committee records is difficult to determine. As was observed by journalist Austin Cross shortly after the war, Heeney had immense power that largely went unnoticed. Cross compared Heeney to a “toll-gate,” controlling the flow of information between the committee and other parts of the government.¹²³ Tangible proof that Heeney actually exercised this power, however, is hard to acquire. Heeney's memoirs and other publications make no reference to any changes that he made to the records. In addition, Heeney's duties did not include writing letters or memos stating his editorial requests as the creator of those records. Furthermore, all his rough notes were destroyed for security reasons. Consequently, it is hard to gauge Heeney's impact on specific information recorded in the minutes. The best evidence suggests that this impact was minimal. His concern for the authenticity of minutes, as evidenced, for example, by his exchange of correspondence with Bridges in 1942 and his initial struggle to create a non-partisan secretariat, made it unlikely that he would jeopardize the office to promote his viewpoints in any of the committee's records. His influence was felt more on the form and structure of CWC records, not on their final contents.

Once minutes were created and distributed, the final task of Heeney and his staff was to ensure the implementation of decisions as recorded in the minutes. Initially, procedures were fairly straightforward, amounting to a simple memo enquiring into the progress of various decisions. This system, however, proved inefficient as the number of decisions grew. In December 1942 Heeney began

circulating a new form, entitled a "Schedule of Decisions," to ensure that departments followed up systematically on committee decisions.¹²⁴ The form listed dates of recent committee meetings, the subjects discussed affecting the department, and the type of action required within stipulated deadlines. Senior department officials returned the form regularly to the PCO with indications as to the progress of each item. Those items that had been implemented were placed on the PCO's internal "Schedule of Decisions (Consolidated)," which was then filed in the PCO's central registry.¹²⁵ Any unimplemented items were re-issued on the department's next schedule. The practice of issuing these schedules was discontinued in September 1944, most likely because the volume of decisions returned to a manageable level, no longer requiring special documentation.

For the researcher, records of the CWC are relatively easy to use. Formally, committee records consist only of the minutes and supporting documents. All 985 supporting documents were bound with the minutes in large red, leather volumes. There are a total of sixteen such volumes plus an index from the CWC which have been microfilmed on seven reels. Access to these records was restricted for thirty years after their creation. Their transfer to the National Archives of Canada began in 1970, an event noted by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in the House of Commons.¹²⁶ The transfer was completed in 1975. There are now no restrictions on access to the microfilmed records of the committee.

Researchers who want to read related committee records such as agendas and memos can use the central registry files of the Privy Council Office from 1939–1945 described in RG 2 at the National Archives of Canada. Heeney filed all of the correspondence and memos relating to drafting and editing Cabinet documents in this registry. These records thus provide essential context for the official records of the CWC and should not be overlooked. They are, however, much more voluminous and can be difficult to navigate at times, although there is a filing system in place.¹²⁷

Although the CWC was not officially abolished until 5 September 1945, its last meeting occurred on 16 May 1945.¹²⁸ King, however, chose not to dismantle the secretariat when the war ended. Instead, he facilitated the continuation and growth of the secretariat by assigning it new responsibilities to serve the full Cabinet in an official capacity. The office had proven itself to be an indispensable part of the efficient administration of Cabinet affairs. King publicly acknowledged such, holding a dinner for both Heeney and Norman Robertson to honour them for their vital contributions to the war effort. King stated at the dinner, "Never would I have been able to endure the heavy burdens of office at a time of war had it not been for Arnold and Norman."¹²⁹ Heeney knew that King did not give such praise easily and was particularly gratified by the comment.¹³⁰

Heeney's stature within the post-war government was further solidified

when King asked him to be part of the Canadian delegation to the Paris peace conference in 1946. Heeney viewed his attendance as only natural, “for hadn’t Hankey been at Paris in 1919?”¹³¹ Eight years later, he was still using Hankey as a benchmark for his success. Heeney left his position in March 1949 to become Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs.¹³² He was succeeded by Norman Robertson first, and then J.W. Pickersgill. His successors’ prominence is further testimony to the stature which Heeney had established for the office during his tenure.

It was not until after the general election of 1957, however, that the Cabinet Secretariat formally gained permanent status. Up to this point, the office existed simply through an order-in-council, which could easily be rescinded. During the transfer of administrations from Louis St. Laurent to John Diefenbaker, St. Laurent and Diefenbaker agreed that the Cabinet Secretary should be the permanent custodian of Cabinet records, thus ending the practice whereby defeated governments removed Cabinet papers.¹³³ “We may count ourselves fortunate,” Heeney later stated, “that these two men agreed that the British tradition should be followed and that the secretary to the Cabinet should be accepted as the custodian of Cabinet papers, responsible for determining what communication should be made thereof to succeeding administrations. With that agreement, the Cabinet secretariat became a permanent institution of Canadian government.”¹³⁴

Upon Heeney’s death in 1970, Gordon Robertson, who was Secretary to the Cabinet at the time, wrote: “It was he who designed the machine that co-ordinates all the vital decisions of government ... the basic design is unchanged because he designed it so well.”¹³⁵ Of his achievements, historian Jack Granatstein later wrote, “Heeney introduced the systemization without which Canada’s war could scarcely have been run or won. ... He made his secretariat the smoothest functioning arm of the Ottawa bureaucracy.”¹³⁶ J.W. Pickersgill, Heeney’s former colleague, recently said of him: “He was a dear friend, whom I count among the greatest public servants of my time.”¹³⁷

Such praise is ultimately rooted in the record-keeping system that Heeney introduced. Canadians now possess a rich resource to study the actions of Canada’s highest policy-making body during an important period in the nation’s history. In the final analysis, this is the most lasting legacy of the decision made for the first time, in 1940, to create and maintain Cabinet records.

Notes

* This article was drafted from the author’s thesis as part of his Master of Arts degree in Archival Studies from the University of Manitoba. He is grateful for the guidance and support of Dr. Tom Nesmith in its creation. Credit for conceiving this topic is his.

1 I refer here specifically to Heeney’s *The Things That Are Caesar’s: Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant* (Toronto, 1972) which has a complete chapter on his days as secretary to the Cabinet. Jack Granatstein also sheds important light on Heeney and his new position

- in *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935–1957* (Toronto, 1982), pp. 187–207.
- 2 Terry Cook, "Paper Trails: A Study in Northern Records and Northern Administration, 1898–1958," in Kenneth Coates and William R. Morrison, eds., *For Purposes of Dominion: Essays in Honour of Morris Zaslow* (North York, 1989), pp. 13–35, and Bill Russell, "The White Man's Paper Burden: Aspects of Record Keeping in the Department of Indian Affairs," *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984–85), pp. 50–72.
 - 3 John Naylor, *A Man and an Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Custody of Cabinet Secrecy* (New York, 1984), pp. 21–22.
 - 4 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
 - 5 Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets, Volume I 1877–1918* (London, 1978), p. 91.
 - 6 Naylor, *A Man and an Institution*, p. 23.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
 - 8 Haans Daalder, *Cabinet Reform in Britain, 1914–1963* (Stanford, 1963), p. 49.
 - 9 Roskill, *Hankey: Volume I*, p. 329.
 - 10 David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, Volume III* (London, 1933), p. 1080.
 - 11 National Archives of Canada (hereafter NA), Arnold Heeney Papers, MG 30, E 144, vol. 3, Public Record Office (London), Handbook, *The Records of the Cabinet Office to 1922* (London, 1966), pp. vii, 4, 51–52. See also Naylor, *A Man and an Institution*, p. 27.
 - 12 Daalder, *Cabinet Reform in Britain*, p. 49.
 - 13 NA, Heeney Papers, vol. 3, PRO handbook, p. 10.
 - 14 Daalder, *Cabinet Reform in Britain*, p. 49. Quoted from L.S. Amery, a former assistant.
 - 15 Maurice Hankey, *The Supreme Command, 1914–1918: Volume Two* (London, 1961) pp. 585–86.
 - 16 John Turner, "Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats: The Higher Direction of War," in Kathleen Burk, ed., *War and the State: The Transformation of the British Government, 1914–1919* (London, 1982), p. 58.
 - 17 John Turner, *Lloyd George's Secretariat* (London, 1980), p. 5.
 - 18 Naylor, *A Man and an Institution*, p. 52.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, p. 263.
 - 21 Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers* Vol. XLVII (1913), Sessional Paper No. 57a, "Report on the Organization of the Public Service of Canada." The first section of this report, entitled "The Methods Employed in the Transaction of Government Business," (pp. 7–10) made several recommendations to improve the administration of Cabinet which, in the opinion of Murray, was being burdened by too much "routine business."
 - 22 Daalder, *Cabinet Reform in Britain, 1914–1963*, p. 275.
 - 23 Canada, Parliament, *Journals of the Senate of the Dominion of Canada, 1867 – 1970* Vol. 55, 2 July 1919, "Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Machinery of Government," pp. 343–44.
 - 24 *Ibid.*
 - 25 W.E.D. Halliday, "The Privy Council Office and the Cabinet Secretariat in Canada in Relation to the Development of Cabinet Government," in *Canada Year Book 1956* (Ottawa, 1956), p. 67. On this distinction, see also W.A. Matheson, *The Prime Minister and Cabinet* (Toronto, 1976), p. 7.
 - 26 Norman Rogers, "The Introduction of Cabinet Government in Canada," *Canadian Bar Review* XI, no. 1 (January 1933), pp. 1–17. See also A.D.P. Heeney, "Cabinet Government in Canada: Some Recent Developments in the Central Executive of Canada," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* XII (1946), p. 285. See also Matheson, *The Prime Minister and Cabinet*, pp. 7–8.

- 27 NA, Heeney Papers, vol. 3, file "Cabinet Government in Canada – Clippings and Miscellaneous Articles." This information is taken from rough notes prepared by Heeney for his 1946 article "Cabinet Government in Canada."
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar's*, p. 75.
- 30 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (13 April 1927), p. 2458. The salary was to be \$8,000.
- 31 Ibid. pp. 2459–60.
- 32 William Lyon Mackenzie King, *The Mackenzie King Diaries [microfiche]: The Complete Manuscript with Accompanying Typewritten Transcription and Other Typewritten Journals* (Toronto, 1973–82), 13 April 1927. King noted his relief to finally have approval for an assistant.
- 33 Queens University Archives (hereafter QUA), John Buchan Fonds (First Baron Tweedsmuir), Collection 2110, vol. 7, General Correspondence, Bickersteth to Tweedsmuir, 4 January 1936. Bickersteth tells Tweedsmuir of the offer King made to him in May 1927. See also Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, pp. 188–89.
- 34 Ibid., Bickersteth to Tweedsmuir, 4 January 1936.
- 35 Ibid., Tweedsmuir to King, 31 December 1935. Bickersteth states that Bennett told him "the time was not right for such an experiment."
- 36 King, *Diary*, 31 December 1935.
- 37 QUA, Buchan Fonds, vol. 7, Tweedsmuir to King, 31 December 1935.
- 38 King, *Diary*, 10 December 1936.
- 39 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 192.
- 40 Ibid., pp. 193–94.
- 41 Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar's*, p. 42.
- 42 NA, Heeney Papers, vol. 1, King to Heeney, 13 July 1938.
- 43 Ibid., Heeney to King, 26 July 1938.
- 44 A.D.P. Heeney, "Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat," *Canadian Public Administration* X (September 1967), p. 367.
- 45 Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar's*, p. 46.
- 46 NA, Heeney Papers, vol. 1, memo, Heeney to King, 24 August 1938.
- 47 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, pp. 198–99.
- 48 J.W. Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole: A Memoir* (Markham, 1994), p. 156. Pickersgill writes of their first meeting that thereafter "Arnold was to be one of my dearest friends for the rest of my life."
- 49 Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar's*, p. 56.
- 50 Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, p. 167.
- 51 Canada, Parliament, *Canada War Proclamations and Orders in Council* Vols. 1–3 (August 1939 – December 1940), P.C. 2424, 30 August 1939. See also C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939–1945* (Ottawa, 1970), p. 69.
- 52 *Canada War Proclamations*, pp. 207–10, P.C. 4017 1/2, 5 December 1939. The nine committees were set up to look into the following issues: Finance and Supply, Food Production and Marketing, Wheat, Fuel and Power, Shipping and Transportation, Price Control and Labour, Internal Security, Legislation, and Public Information.
- 53 By July 1940, the Committee had the following members: The Prime Minister (Mackenzie King), the Minister of Justice (Ernest Lapointe), the Minister of Finance (J.L. Ilesley), the Minister of Defence (Ian Mackenzie), the Leader of the Government in the Senate (R. Dandurand), the Minister of Mines and Resources (T.A. Crerar), the Minister of Munitions and Supply (C.D. Howe), the Minister of National Defence for Air (C.G. Power), the Minister of National War Services (J.G. Gardiner), and the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services (Angus Macdonald).
- 54 *Canada War Proclamations*, pp. 207–10, P.C. 4017 1/2, 5 December 1939.

- 55 Heeneey, "Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat," p. 370.
- 56 J.W. Pickersgill, ed., *The Mackenzie King Record: Volume I, 1939–1944* (Toronto, 1960), pp. 101–102. The Conservatives insisted on full membership only.
- 57 Heeneey, *The Things That Are Caesar's*, p. 79.
- 58 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 28.
- 59 Halliday, "The Privy Council Office and Cabinet Secretariat," p. 67.
- 60 Heeneey made a similar proposal to the Prime Minister in July 1939. At that time, however, there were no plans to replace Lemaire, who had not yet announced his retirement, and King would not consider amending the clerk's duties while Lemaire was still in office. Heeneey credits Skelton for initially conceiving the plan and for taking the initiative in bringing it up with the Prime Minister in January 1940 when Lemaire announced his retirement. See *Ibid.*, pp. 200–201, and Heeneey, "Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat," p. 369.
- 61 NA, Heeneey Papers, vol. 1, Heeneey to L.B. Pearson, 22 April 1940. Heeneey makes reference to the lack of minutes and agenda before his appointment as Secretary to the CWC as the reason for many matters having to be deferred.
- 62 Heeneey, *The Things That Are Caesar's*, p. 62.
- 63 *Ibid.*, p. 77. This designation was given to the office at the insistence of D'Arcy McGee's brother, Francis, upon assuming the post in 1882.
- 64 King, *Diary*, 22 March 1940.
- 65 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 202.
- 66 NA, Heeneey Papers, vol. 12, file "Clippings: 1923, 1924, 1929, 1936–1940," *Montreal Gazette* (28 March 1940), p. 8.
- 67 *Ibid.*, *Financial Post* (13 April 1940), p. 6.
- 68 NA, RG 2, 7C, Minutes and Documents of the Cabinet War Committee, vol. 1 (microfilm C-11789).
- 69 Heeneey, "Cabinet Government in Canada," p. 296.
- 70 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, pp. 204–205.
- 71 Halliday, "The Privy Council Office and the Cabinet Secretariat," p. 68.
- 72 NA, RG 2, B2, vol. 7, file P-50 (vol. II), Privy Council Office Estimates, 1940–41. See also *ibid.*, vol. 62, file C-20 (vol. II), memo, W.E.D. Halliday to Heeneey, 21 August 1945. The British figures are for 1941.
- 73 Heeneey, "Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat," p. 370. See also NA, RG 2, B2, vol. 40, file C-20 (vol. 2), 1942–1945, Heeneey to Bridges, 7 February 1942. See also *Ibid.*, memo, Baldwin to Heeneey, 27 October 1943.
- 74 Heeneey, "Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat," p. 370.
- 75 NA, Heeneey Papers, vol. 10, file "Publication: Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat – Correspondence, 1953–1967," rough notes.
- 76 *Ibid.*
- 77 A fourth, termed "Items for Decision," seems to have been used sparingly and will not be examined here.
- 78 NA, RG 2, B2, vol. 24, file C-10-3-B (vol. II), 1943–1945. File contains departmental correspondence suggesting topics for discussion, along with provisional agendas.
- 79 *Ibid.*, file C-10-3-B (vol. 1). For instance, Heeneey to C.G. Power, 5 May 1941.
- 80 *Ibid.*
- 81 *Ibid.*, file C-10-3 (September – October 1940), 28 October 1940, form letter.
- 82 *Ibid.*
- 83 *Ibid.*, file C-10-3-A (January – June 1941). See also *ibid.*, vol. 24, file C-10-3-E "Cabinet War Committee Meetings, 1942–1945."
- 84 *Ibid.*
- 85 NA, RG 2, 7C, vol. 1 (microfilm C-11789), minutes, 5 June 1940 and 27 August 1940. See also NA, RG 2, B2, vol. 40, memo, Halliday to Heeneey, 19 January 1944.

- 86 Ibid.
- 87 NA, RG 2, B2, vol. 1, file C-10-3-B (May – Dec. 1941). None of the agendas in this file exceed one page.
- 88 NA, RG 2, 7C, vol. 2 (microfilm C-11789), minutes, 27 August 1940. Mechanisms for reports from the board were established during this meeting.
- 89 NA, Heeney Papers, vol. 2, “Memoirs n.d., Chapter 10: draft,” pp. 247–48.
- 90 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 205.
- 91 NA, RG 2, 7C, vol. 5 (microfilm C-11789), minutes, 2 October 1941. This was determined by comparing the agenda to the course of these minutes.
- 92 Heeney, “Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat,” p. 371.
- 93 Jack Granatstein, *A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft, 1929–1968* (Ottawa, 1981), p. 184.
- 94 NA, Heeney Papers, vol. 10, “Publication: Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat – Correspondence, 1953–1967,” rough notes.
- 95 Heeney, “Cabinet Government in Canada,” p. 289.
- 96 NA, RG 2, 7C, vol. 7 (microfilm C-4654), Cabinet War Committee Document No. 1, 4 November 1941.
- 97 Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar’s*, pp. 60–61 and Granatstein, *A Man of Influence*, pp. 111–12.
- 98 Specifically, these calls started with McLennan’s “Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Machinery of Government,” in 1919.
- 99 NA, RG 2, 7C, vol. 1 (microfilm C-11789), minutes, 8 December 1939, 14 December 1939, 22 January 1940, and 12 February 1940. These minutes were added to the central registry after Heeney’s official appointment.
- 100 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 203.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 NA, RGB, B2, vol. 21, file C-10-3-A, “Cabinet Committees: War Committee, correspondence re: minutes, etc.”
- 103 Ibid., vol. 57, file C-10-3-R, “Return of Cabinet War Committee Documents, Minutes.”
- 104 NA, Heeney Papers, vol. 10, “Publication: Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat – Correspondence, 1953–1967,” draft, p. 10. See also Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 204.
- 105 NA, RGB, 7C, vol. 1 (microfilm C-11789) and vol. 17A (microfilm C-4873), Index. Minutes of the first four meetings of the committee were actually numbered A to D as these took place before Heeney’s appointment and were transcribed at a later date after the numbering system was already started.
- 106 NA, RGB, B2, vol. 21, file C-10-3-A, “Cabinet Committees: War Committee, correspondence re: minutes, etc. 1943 Aug. – Dec.”
- 107 Ibid., vol. 1, file C-10-3-C (1940–41), see for example, Heeney to W. Smellie (Clerk of Estimates, Department of Finance), 8 November 1940.
- 108 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 204.
- 109 Ibid., p. 203.
- 110 NA, RGB, 7C vol. 12 (microfilm C4875), minutes, 6 January 1943.
- 111 NA, Heeney Papers, vol. 2, “Memoirs, n.d. Chapter 10: draft,” p. 247.
- 112 NA, RGB, 7C, vol. 12 (microfilm C-4875), minutes, 6 January 1943.
- 113 NA, RGB, B2, vol. 35, file C-10-3-G (1942–1945), Halliday to Heeney, 2 December 1943.
- 114 Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, p. 118.
- 115 NA, RG 2, B2, vol. 21, file C-10-3-A, “Cabinet Committees: War Committee Correspondence re: Minutes, etc. (Aug – Dec 1943),” letter, Ralston to Heeney, 18 August 1943.
- 116 Ibid., memo, Heeney to King, 19 August 1943.
- 117 NA, RG 2, 7C, vol. 3, (microfilm C-11789), minutes, 14 November 1940. See also vol. 16 (microfilm C-4876), minutes, 24 May 1944.

- 118 NA, RG 2, B2, vol. 40, C-20 (vol. 2) 1942–1945, “Cabinet – Representation, etc.,” memo, Heeney to Bridges, 7 February 1942.
- 119 Ibid., Bridges to Heeney, 18 March 1942.
- 120 This assertion is verified in a memorandum Heeney had commissioned in 1943. See, NA, RG 2, Vol. 40, file C-20 (vol. 2), “Memorandum for Mr. Heeney – United Kingdom War Cabinet Procedure,” 27 October 1943.
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 King, *Diary*, 28 November 1944. See also Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 206.
- 123 Granatstein, *A Man of Influence*, p. 248.
- 124 NA, Heeney Papers, vol. 10, file “Publication: Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat – Correspondence, 1953–1967,” draft, p. 11.
- 125 NA, RG 2, B2, vol. 35, file C-10-3-F, “1943 – 1945.”
- 126 House of Commons, *Debates* (1 May 1969), pp. 3199–3200. Trudeau announced new guidelines for the transfer of most government records to the National Archives after thirty years. He commented specifically on the significance of CWC records.
- 127 The thesis from which this article is based contains a complete description of the central registry system used by the PCO. Brian Masschaele, “Memos and Minutes: Arnold Heeney, the Cabinet War Committee and the Establishment of the Canadian Cabinet Secretariat during the Second World War” (M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1995). Files beginning with the code C-10-3 pertain to the CWC.
- 128 NA, RG 2, 7C, vol. 17 (microfilm C-4877), P.C. 5915.
- 129 Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar’s*, p. 91.
- 130 Ibid.
- 131 Heeney, “Mackenzie King and the Cabinet Secretariat,” p. 372.
- 132 Halliday, “The Privy Council Office and Cabinet Secretariat,” p. 69.
- 133 Matheson, *The Prime Minister and Cabinet*, p. 93.
- 134 Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar’s*, p. 80.
- 135 Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 207.
- 136 Granatstein, *A Man of Influence*, p. 287.
- 137 Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, p. 787.