

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in
Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE EFFICIENT SECRET

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INSTITUTIONS AND DECISIONS

Editors

Professor James Alt, Harvard University

Professor Douglass North, Washington University in St. Louis

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

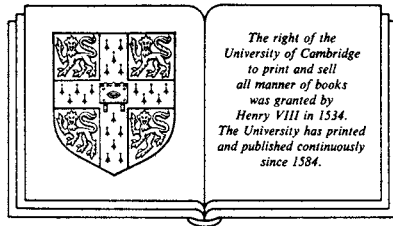
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE EFFICIENT SECRET

The Cabinet and the development of political parties in Victorian England

GARY W. COX
*Department of Government,
University of Texas at Austin*



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge

London New York New Rochelle

Melbourne Sydney

Cambridge University Press
 052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in
 Victorian England
 Gary W. Cox
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521327794

© Cambridge University Press 1987

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1987
 This digitally printed first paperback version 2005

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Cox, Gary W.

The efficient secret.

(Political economy of institutions and decisions)

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Political parties – Great Britain – History – 19th
 century. 2. Elections – Great Britain – History – 19th
 century. 3. Voting – Great Britain – History – 19th
 century. 4. Cabinet system – Great Britain – History –
 19th century. 5. Great Britain – Politics and government
 – 19th century. I. Title. II. Series.

JN1120.C69 1987 324.241'009 86–17517

ISBN-13 978-0-521-32779-4 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-32779-2 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-01901-9 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-01901-X paperback

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in
Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To Elizabeth Frost Boadway

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The efficient secret of the English Constitution may be described as the close union, the nearly complete fusion, of the executive and legislative powers. . . . The connecting link is *the cabinet*.

Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, 1865

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of tables and figures</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Series editors' preface</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii

PART I INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction and outline	3
2 The historical setting	9

PART II THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISCIPLINED PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES

3 The measurement and theory of party cohesion	21
4 The Peelites and the disruption of the party system	32
5 The caucus	37
6 The origin of the efficient secret	45
7 The electoral connection and ministerial ambition	68
8 The Cabinet's strength: threats of resignation and dissolution	80

PART III THE ELECTORATE

9 The development of a party-oriented electorate	91
10 The causes of a party-oriented electorate	113
11 The legislative consequences of a party-oriented electorate	137
12 The influence of constituents in Victorian England	148

Cambridge University Press
052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in
Victorian England
Gary W. Cox
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

PART IV
CONCLUSION

13	The history of party voting	169
	<i>Appendix</i>	171
	<i>References</i>	177
	<i>Author index</i>	183
	<i>Subject index</i>	185

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Tables and figures*

TABLES

2.1	Expansion of the press, 1824–86	<i>page</i> 13
3.1	Intra-party unity: cohesion, simple averages	23
3.2	Intra-party unity: cohesion, weighted averages	23
3.3	Intra-party unity: cohesion on unwhipped votes	24
3.4	Inter-party differences: index of likeness, simple averages	24
3.5	Numbers and percentages of whipped divisions	24
5.1	Conservative discipline as a function of Conservative organization	42
5.2	Changes in Conservative discipline and organization	43
6.1	Speaking in Parliament, 1820–96	53
6.2	Voting participation in Parliament, 1836–99	54
6.3	Size of constituency and speaking in Parliament	58
6.4	Size of constituency and voting participation in Parliament, 1841–47	58
6.5	Size of constituency and voting participation in Parliament, 1852–57	59
6.6	Amendments carried against the government whips	64
7.1	Incumbents in English provincial boroughs, 1835–1900	73
7.2	Incumbents in English counties, 1835–80	74
7.3	Tenure in the House of Commons by period of entry	76
7.4	Party support of those who later received ministerial posts	78
9.1	Vote count for election of 1874 in Pontefract	96
9.2	Available vote counts, 1818–1910	99
9.3	Usable vote counts, 1818–1910	100
9.4	Trends in split voting, 1818–1910	103
9.5	Trends in non-partisan plumping, 1818–1910	108

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Tables and figures*

9.6	Split voting and non-partisan plumping, 1832–1910	109
9.7	Split voting by contest type, 1832–1910	110
10.1	Percentage of English boroughs having local Conservative organizations in 1874, by size and competitiveness	129
10.2	Correlation between split voting and number of voters	130
10.3	Split voting in borough contests with three candidates	131
11.1	Number of candidates at contested elections in double-member English provincial boroughs, 1835–1900	138
12.1	Split voting as a function of crossbench dissent	155
12.2	Crossbench dissent as a function of split voting	158
12.3	Agreement of pairs of English MPs who did and did not share constituency	162

FIGURES

9.1	Trends in split voting, 1818–1910	104
9.2	Trends in split voting, as measured by the median and first and third quartiles	111
10.1	The effect of issues on the party system	123

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Series editors' preface

The Cambridge series on the Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions is built around attempts to answer two central questions: How do institutions evolve in response to individual incentives, strategies, and choices; and how do institutions affect the performance of political and economic systems? The scope of the series is comparative and historical rather than international or specifically American, and the focus is positive rather than normative.

Gary Cox's work seeks to show when and explain why party became the dominant influence on voting behavior in nineteenth century England. It is path-breaking in two respects. First, whereas it has long been known that party voting among MPs increased dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century, Cox's work is the first to document conclusively a parallel rise in party voting among voters. Second, Cox offers a novel explanation of a key nineteenth century institutional change – the centralization of legislative initiative in the Cabinet after the first Reform Act – and clarifies the important impact of this change on popular and parliamentary voting behavior. In so doing, he systematically analyzes the interaction between Victorian constituencies and their MPs and shows how this interaction was affected by the declining parliamentary powers of backbenchers and by the rapidly changing political and economic context.

Thus, Cox's work demonstrates how political and economic outcomes reflect choices constrained by institutions, while also asking why and how, in view of the outcomes, such institutions developed.

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

The development of “modern” political parties is a leading theme of nineteenth century political history. In the United States, in England, and on the Continent a set of broadly similar events radically transformed the way in which politics was conducted. Political parties were at the center of these developments. The electoral organization of parties became more and more elaborate with each successive extension of the suffrage; the use of party labels by candidates became increasingly common; and the allegiance of voters to political parties rather than to individuals became more and more widespread.

This book describes and attempts to explain the fascinating and, in cumulation, revolutionary changes that took place in the English party system during the nineteenth century. Substantively, the book focuses on two key institutional changes – the development of the Cabinet’s *legislative* powers (the efficient secret) and the expansion of the electorate – and traces their effects on the dramatic increase in party voting both in Parliament (Part II) and in the electorate (Part III). Because these substantive interests focus on the behavior of large aggregates of people, I have, whenever possible and appropriate, sought statistical evidence to support my arguments. This has entailed, among other things, the extensive and systematic use of poll books and newspapers in order to gather detailed electoral returns, the use of computerized lists of divisions in the House of Commons, and the use of a census of local Conservative party associations conducted in 1874.

In gathering these statistical data, I have incurred a number of debts of gratitude. The University Research Institute of the University of Texas at Austin and the National Science Foundation (SES-8306032) made possible a research trip to England in the summer of 1983, during which I collected most of the electoral data on which the book is based. F. W. S. Craig kindly gave me the benefit of his considerable experience in data

Cambridge University Press

052101901X - The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England

Gary W. Cox

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

collection at this time. The Institute of Historical Research at the University of London greatly facilitated the research process by its policy of having its entire collection of poll books in open stacks. As regards data on voting in Parliament, I am grateful to W. O. Aydelotte, John R. Bylsma, James C. Hamilton, Lance E. Davis, and Robert A. Huttenback, all of whom allowed me to use data that they had collected. H. J. Hanham was kind enough to supply me with a xerographic copy of his own copy of the census of Conservative party associations mentioned above.

There is more to a book than data, of course, and I have benefitted from the help of others in many areas other than data collection. Several research assistants have helped in the coding and preparation of the data for analysis, as well as other tasks: Grace Dunn, Michael Goodman, Jeff Sutter, Lee Ann Banaszak, Scott Ingram, and Steven Knowlton. The word processing of the too many drafts of this book was expertly performed by the secretaries in the School of Business at Washington University in St. Louis: Carla Stricklin, Linda Clemons, Phyllis Janish, Mary Blair, Kathy Illyes, and Victoria Siegel. Carla Stricklin deserves special mention for her preparation of the final manuscript.

This book began as my dissertation at the California Institute of Technology, and the efforts and encouragement of my dissertation advisors, Bruce E. Cain and J. Morgan Kousser, are still appreciated. More recently, I have benefitted from the comments of the participants in the Thursday night seminars at Washington University; those of Richard W. Davis, James E. Alt, and Douglass C. North have been particularly helpful.