**Question: Discuss the features of British Cabinet**

The Cabinet is the core of the British constitutional system. It is the supreme directing authority. Barker calls it as ‘the magnet of policy’. Lowell calls it, “keystone of political arch.” Sir John Marriot describes it as the ‘pivot round which the whole political machinery revolves.” Ramsay Muir speaks of it as “the steering-wheel of the ship of state.” With whatever colorful phrase it may be described and from whatever angle it is approached, the Cabinet is the motive power of political action in Britain. The main features of British Cabinet system are explained as follows;

1. **A Constitutional Executive Head:** Cabinet government means the King is no longer the directing and deciding factor responsible before the nation for the measure taken. The whole of the political and executive power of the Crown is exercised in the King’s name by the political men who belong normally to the majority party in Parliament. As the King takes no part in politics, he does not participate in the confidential discussion of ministers. In other words, the King does not preside over the Cabinet meetings.
2. **Chosen from Parliamentary Majority:** Ministers are members of Parliament and generally in modern times, of the House Commons, and they are chosen from that party which has majority in that House. The membership of Parliament gives to Ministers a representative and responsible character. It also binds together the Executive and Legislature authorities and there can be no working at cross purposes between these two organs of Government.
3. **Ministerial Responsibility:** According Birch the term “responsible meant” may be applied to the British political system in three main respects – In the first place, it may be regarded as a characteristic of the British system that government do not act irresponsibly. Secondly, responsible government is responsive to public opinion and it acts in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the people. The third and most important meaning of responsible government is that the government is answerable to parliament for its all acts.
4. **Political Homogeneity:** Political homogeneity is one of the most important features of British political system. The members of Cabinet are selected from same party. The political party which obtains majority in the House of Common the leader of the party is appointed as Prime Minister and after that the Prime Minister selects other as the members of Cabinet from the party in which he belongs. Due to homogeneity character the member of Cabinet view the same opinion in the decisions taken by the Cabinet.
5. **Leadership of Prime Minister:** The Cabinet is a team which plays the game of politics under the captaincy of the Prime Minister. According to Morley, “The Prime Minister is the keystone of the arch.” He is the leader of the Parliamentary majority and all Ministers work under his accepted leadership. It is from the Walpole, the first Prime Minister of England this conventions starts that the Prime Minister select his own Ministers
6. **Secrecy of Cabinet Meeting:** Another important feature of the Cabinet system is the secrecy of the policy and party solidarity. The Cabinet is a secret body collectively responsible for its decisions. It deliberates in secret and its proceedings are highly confidential. All the ministers are expected to maintain complete secrecy with regard to the proceedings and policies of the Cabinet. The secrecy of Cabinet proceedings is safeguarded by law and convention.

**Question: Discuss the power and functions of Cabinet**

According to the Report of the Machinery of Government Committee (1918), there are three functions of the Cabinet- a. The final determination of policy to be submitted to Parliament, b. The supreme control of the national executive in accordance with the policy prescribed by Parliament, c. The continuous co-ordination and delimitation of the activities of the several Departments of the State. These functions of the Cabinet may be described as follows:

1. **Policy Determining Functions:** The Cabinet is primarily a deliberative and policy-formulating body. It discusses and decides all sorts of national and international problems. Once the Cabinet takes a decision on a particular national or international problem, all members are expected to abide by it, irrespective of their likes or dislikes. When the Cabinet has determined on a policy, the appropriate Department carries it out either by administrative action or by submitting a new Bill to Parliament and getting it enacted. Legislation is thus the handmaid of administration.
2. **Legislative Functions:** The Cabinet is the instrument that links the Executive branch of government to the Legislative branch. The Cabinet ministers guide and control the work of Parliament. The Cabinet plans the legislative programme at the beginning of every Parliamentary session and prepares the speech from the throne spelling out the legislative programme. They formulate and introduce bills in the Parliament on all significant matters which in their judgment require legislative attention. The Cabinet by virtue of its enjoying a majority in the House of Commons can get the bills passed in the Parliament as it can direct the Parliament for action in a certain way.
3. **Supreme Control of the National Executive:** The Cabinet is the supreme national executive. Legally, all the executive power vests in the King. But in actual practice, the King is only a titular head. It is the Cabinet which really exercises all the executive powers vested in the King. The Cabinet ministers preside over the major departments of government and carry out the policy determined by the Cabinet and approved by Parliament. As heads of the departments, the Ministers are responsible for the policies pursued by their departments and for their administrative efficiency. They decide policy issues that arise in their departments, give instructions to their principal subordinates and supervise the departmental activities. The ministers are also answerable to Parliament for all acts of omission and commission and accordingly must ensure the efficient management of departmental business keeping in view the needs of the people.
4. **Cabinet as Coordinator:** The essential function of the Cabinet is to coordinate and guide the functions of the several departments of government. Though administration is divided into numerous departments, yet it is difficult to make a water-tight division among the various departments. The action of one department affects the work of another department. In fact, every important problem cuts across departmental boundaries. For instance, a foreign policy decision must often be made in relation to defense and trade policy. Similarly, an educational policy decision may concern other departments like the Treasury Department. In such cases, the Cabinet does the task of coordinating policy.
5. **Determination of Finances:** The Cabinet is responsible for the whole expenditure of the State and for raising necessary revenues to meet it. The Cabinet decides as to what taxes will be levied, how these will be collected and in what manner these will be spent. The Cabinet takes decisions regarding the imposition of taxes and abolition or reduction of old ones. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is an important member of the Cabinet. He prepares the annual budget and the same is always discussed thoroughly in the Cabinet before it is presented to the Parliament.

**Conclusion**

From the above discussion regarding the functions of the Cabinet, it can be concluded that it occupies a central position in the British Parliamentary system. It formulates the policy, enforces the laws, runs the administration, prepares the budget and decides on matters of war and peace. In short, the Cabinet is the Government of the United Kingdom. The Cabinet has no specific constitutional or statutory basis. Despite that, the powers of the Cabinet are so vast that some observers have used the term “Cabinet Dictatorship.”