



Clark
MUN
XII



Warren G.
Harding's Cabinet

Table of Contents

Letter from Your Crisis Director	2
Introduction	3
Historical Background	5
Role/Operation of the Committee	7
Character List	8

Letter from the Crisis Director

Delegates,

Welcome to ClarkMUN XII, and this Crisis Committee on the Cabinet of Warren G. Harding, 29th President of the United States of America. My name is Evan Medcraft, and I will be your Crisis Director when you all come to Worcester in March. I am a Senior majoring in Political Science with sub-concentrations in American Politics and Law and Society. Law school may be in my future, but I am currently exploring all opportunities in the wide range of fields that political science has to offer. Other than my current commitment as Crisis Director, I was the vice-president of the Clark Club Soccer team, the Undersecretary General of Committees for our online ClarkMUN XI last year, a member of Clark University's Epstein Pre-Law Society, and performed research for the Political Science Department. I am from Stow, Massachusetts, and went to Nashoba Regional High School.

The world of the 1920s was a wild and wacky place. Technological and economic innovation seemed to speed the United States on its way toward progress, yet the First Red Scare, labor disputes, Prohibition, and the lingering taints of racism threatened to offset these advancements. At the center of it all was President Warren G. Harding and his Cabinet, a hodgepodge collection of patronage positions and the occasional competent individual. This set in motion a turbulent few years with Harding at the helm, involving scandals, corruption, social and racial upheaval, and the implementation of economic policies preceding the worst depression and economic collapse in American history.

You, the delegates, will fill the roles of the members of Harding's cabinet, as well as those close to him, including journalists, Senators, Representatives, and high-profile businessmen. With such a broad assortment of individuals with their own personal agendas, we are guaranteed to witness the good, the bad, and the ugly during this committee. The choice is yours: Will you rally around your president, or speed America on its way toward a social and economic collapse?

If you have any questions about the committee, background guide, or the ClarkMUN conference in general, feel free to send me an email.

Sincerely,
Evan Medcraft
Crisis Director, Warren G. Harding's Cabinet
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Introduction

It is March 5, 1921. Warren G. Harding has just been inaugurated as the 29th President of the United States of America. As of now, the world is looking pretty good: Europe is emerging from the ashes of The Great War, the United States is experiencing a major economic boom as industry thrives, and technological advancements such as the telephone, automobile, and washing machine make life infinitely easier for millions of Americans. In addition, women were granted the right to vote with the Nineteenth Amendment, while millions of African Americans moved north to fill higher-paying industrial jobs during the War, meaning the standard of living improved for countless people even before the Harding Administration had even taken office.

However, not all is well in paradise. Despite slight advancements for women, they are still bound by strict social standards. In the South, Jim Crow rules; in the North, it is slightly better, but not by much. The Eighteenth Amendment catered to the religious Protestants of the Heartland but spurred the growth of organized crime in the cities. Labor disputes arose in full force in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Despite the booming stock market, anarchists and radicals made Wall Street their primary target for terrorist attacks. To cap it off, the First Red Scare resulted in a crackdown on Bolsheviks and dissenting opinions, meaning the American principles of free speech and expression clashed with the simple desire to create a safer world.

The Harding Administration seized command in 1921 with all of these things in mind. President Harding won the election of 1920 in a landslide by nearly 300 electoral votes, seven million popular votes, and had a popular vote-winning margin of 26%, the highest in American history. This Administration has a commanding mandate from the voters, but can these men pass up such a glorious opportunity to line their pockets at the taxpayer's expense?

Now for a few important notes on how the committee will be conducted:

- The committee starts on March 5, 1921, the day after President Harding's inauguration. Although the members of his cabinet have not technically been confirmed by the Senate yet, for the purpose of this committee all delegates will have the full portfolio powers of the character they are representing.
- Certain members of this committee underwent some... *unfortunate* events in the early 1920s. For example, cabinet member Albert Fall was tried for corruption, while President Harding himself died of a heart attack in 1923. To ensure that this committee is fair to everyone, **such events will not occur unless enabled by the delegates of**

the committee (i.e. Fall will not be put on trial and Harding will not die... unless you want him to).

- This period of American history was rather problematic for many marginalized groups, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, and the mentally handicapped. As such, no sexism, racism, ableism, or any other kinds of 'isms' will be tolerated.

Historical Background

As mentioned, Warren G. Harding's administration took office at a time of great social, economic, and technological upheaval in the United States. The administration must find a way to navigate each and every one of these issues in a way that appeases all parties involved. While the following list is by no means exhaustive, it is a good starting point for the committee.

The Great War

Although the Great War formally ended in 1918, the United States dealt with the fallout for years afterward. The war produced an economic shift as millions of people, mostly African Americans, moved to the North to fill jobs in various mechanized industries. This continued the nation's shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy and improved the standard of living for millions of workers. However, this brought problems of its own: Soldiers returning home found increased competition for their old jobs, millions of soldiers had to integrate back into normal society after the horrors of war, and the American government rejected the Versailles Treaty that President Woodrow Wilson crafted. The United States must navigate these issues at home, as well as determine America's role in the new world order.

The Labor Movement

The days of the 'robber barons' of American capitalism seemed to be ending by the 1920s. However, this was still prior to the New Deal era standards: When Harding took office, child labor was still technically legal, strikes could be broken up by soldiers with the use of force, and there was no limit on the number of work hours in a standard workweek.¹ However, anti-trust laws were becoming more effective, muckraking investigative journalists had publicized much of the abuse in many industries, and the tide was slowly starting to turn in favor of the American worker. The Administration was generally divided regarding their opinions of the labor movement, meaning they must compromise on a course of action for the good of the people.

Prohibition

Following decades of pressure by anti-alcohol groups, the prohibition of the sale of alcohol was instituted by the Eighteenth Amendment, which took effect in 1920. Problems emerged early on: Prohibition was generally supported by rural Protestants but opposed by urban communities, leading to sectional conflict; the law itself was too vague and not enough

¹ *Debs v. United States*, 249 U.S. 211 (1919)
Hammer v. Dagenhart, 247 U.S. 251 (1918)

resources were allocated to enforce it; and criminal gangs quickly cornered the market on alcohol production and distribution, setting off a wave of crime as Prohibition continued. A decent amount of Harding's Cabinet are Prohibitionists, but others are not; as such, this Administration must decide whether to overturn Prohibition or enforce a potentially catastrophic policy.²

Women's Rights/Civil Rights

Civil rights in the United States is the embodiment of incremental progress. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth guaranteed African Americans freedom and other rights following the Civil War, but the following decades yielded regression in many forms as segregation, Jim Crow laws, sharecropping, and voting restrictions put everyone back at square one.³ Women's rights activists managed to win the right to vote with the Nineteenth Amendment through much blood, sweat, and tears, but their battle is not over: Women are still more or less second class citizens at this time, and activists have set their sights on an Equal Rights Amendment to enshrine equality between the sexes in the Constitution.⁴ Despite these successes, there is work to do on both fronts as the future of tens of millions of people is on the line.

The Red Scare

Following the Russian Revolution and the hyper-nationalism of the Great War, the United States became a hotbed of fear. With the fall of the Russian Tsars, many thought a communist takeover of the United States was imminent. As such, America entered a critical period where the guarantees of free speech and expression were overridden by fear and terror. Left-wing and anarchist organizations were viewed with suspicion; immigrants from South, Central, and Eastern Europe faced racism and violence upon landing in the U.S.; and law enforcement took a tough-on-crime stance on communists involving illegal searches and seizures. The Bill of Rights is at risk of falling apart under the Harding Administration's watch, and they must decide whether to buy into the fear or safeguard human rights despite their instincts saying otherwise.⁵

² [Prohibition - OverSimplified](#)

³ <https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/what.htm>

⁴ <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/equal-rights-amendment-explained>

⁵ <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1063/red-scare>

Role/Operation of the Committee

As the nation's duly-elected government, the Harding Administration must face these issues head-on. The American people expect progress and stability during a troubling time, meaning their hopes and dreams hinge upon this committee's ability to succeed. As shown in the following character list, this committee comprises roughly half and half of Government officials and private citizens. As such, everyone in the committee (regardless of their status) will have **one equal vote**, with a **simple majority** being required to pass measures (directives). As for voting itself, directives produced by the committee will act as recommendations for Congress to take action due to the Cabinet's status as an advisory body.

Character List

The following characters will be represented by delegates in the committee. We have provided some basic information on each character, but delegates should do their own research to determine how to best represent them in the committee. JSTOR and the Library of Congress are great online resources to find both primary and secondary sources, and we have also included a list of recommended readings in this background guide. The chair will represent President Harding to avoid giving too much power to an individual delegate.

1. Calvin Coolidge, 29th Vice President of the United States

The most senior member of this committee, Vice President Coolidge was a politician through and through. Coolidge held offices in Massachusetts as a State Representative, mayor of the city of Northampton, Lieutenant Governor, Governor, and was eventually nominated as Vice President on Harding's ticket. Coolidge was regarded as a progressive for his support of women's rights, racial equality, and democratic reforms, but also hated the labor movement and supported fiscal conservatism. As Vice President, Coolidge gained the nickname of 'Silent Cal' for his quiet tendencies and dry sense of humor: Friends once joked that he was 'silent in five languages', and legend has it that he once sat through nine innings of a professional baseball game with his wife in total silence, only breaking it to ask her the time.

2. Charles Evans Hughes, Secretary of State 15

Charles Evans Hughes accepted his position of Secretary of State following an illustrious career. He was elected Republican governor of New York in 1906 and instituted progressive policies before being named a Justice of the Supreme Court in 1910. He resigned six years later to run for President as a Republican, but lost to the incumbent Woodrow Wilson and accepted leadership of the State Department four years later. Regarded as an outstanding negotiator, Hughes sought to make the United States a world superpower in the void following the Great War.

3. Andrew Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury

Andrew Mellon had a lot of money. Like, *a lot* of money. As a banker in a wealthy Pittsburgh family, his Mellon National Bank would go on to hold more deposits than any other bank on the entire Eastern Seaboard. He parlayed this money into both investments and donations: Mellon owned or financed coal, oil, steel, railroad, electrical, and whiskey companies, and donated

countless sums to the Republican party during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. A conservative Republican, Mellon favored balanced budgets and an overhaul to the federal income tax, although he didn't care much about unemployment, inflation, and other things regular citizens considered important. Mellon's business ties raised many alarms about potential conflicts of interest, and his fortune grew following his appointment as Treasury Secretary (which likely was not a coincidence). Regardless, Mellon was a wealthy man with extensive political connections, especially in his home state of Pennsylvania.

4. John W. Weeks, Secretary of War

A military man at heart, John W. Weeks joined the Naval Academy, graduated in 1881, and served for two years before returning to active duty as a Lieutenant during the Spanish American War in 1898. After working as a banker in the interim, Weeks turned to politics. He was elected alderman and mayor of Newton, Massachusetts, served multiple terms in the United States House of Representatives, and eventually became a Senator. His political career led to contributions in banking and environmental legislation, and his greatest achievement was a bill creating national forests across the country. As Secretary of War, Weeks was regarded as a 'competent, honest, and respected administrator and adviser' who navigated the War Department's post-Great War downsizing.

5. Harry M. Daugherty, Attorney General

Harry M. Daugherty made his name as a political operative in his home state of Ohio. In doing so, he gained a reputation as a snake in Ohio's bitterly divided Republican establishment, leading the party to blackball him from future nominations. Daugherty later became involved in the conservative Republican campaigns of William McKinley in 1900 and William H. Taft in 1912 before becoming Warren Harding's advisor during the 1920 election. After winning the election, Daugherty was appointed Attorney General and eventually became a member of the 'Ohio Gang', a cabal of officials in the Harding Administration who gained their position due to patronage and kickbacks. Although Daugherty's appointment is dubious, the quality of his conduct remains to be seen.

6. William H. Hays, Postmaster General

As the nation's mailman-in-chief, William H. Hays had an unremarkable role in the Harding Administration. However, he held the powerful position of Chairman of the Republican National Convention from 1918 to 1921, meaning he controlled much of the party machinery. He parlayed this position into a role as one of Harding's campaign managers during the 1920 election, leading to his appointment. During this time, Hays also became involved with the

Sinclair Oil Corporation, which had donated large sums of money and bonds to the Republican Party to pay off its campaign debt. As a result, Hays became peripherally involved in a scheme to repay the Sinclair Oil Competition with leases to oil fields in Teapot Dome, Wyoming. His role as Chairman of the RNC means he still has massive control over party insiders. While not from Ohio, Hays was a de facto member of the Ohio Gang, and h

7. Edwin Denby, Secretary of the Navy

One could say that political exploits ran in Edwin Denby's blood: His father and grandfather were both Union officers during the Civil War, and his brother was a diplomat to Austria and China. Denby himself studied law, played football at the University of Michigan, and fought in the Navy during the Spanish American War and Marines during the Great War. All of this gave him wide-ranging connections throughout legal and diplomatic circles. Most notably, Denby served three terms as a Representative of Michigan in Congress, which put him on the map as a potential political operative. Following his appointment as Secretary of the Navy, Denby authorized the control of Navy oil fields in Teapot Dome, Wyoming to the Department of the Interior. Denby was a member of the Ohio Gang.

8. Albert B. Fall, Secretary of the Interior

A native Kentuckian, Albert B. Fall made his name in the Territory of New Mexico, where he served in a number of territorial offices before becoming a delegate on New Mexico's constitutional convention and becoming its first-ever senator in 1912. Considered a living legend by New Mexicans, Fall was nonetheless involved in some sketchy incidents involving cattle rustling and murder most foul (he did not commit the crimes, but defended the perpetrators in court and won their acquittal). As senator, Fall met and befriended the future members of the Ohio Gang, assuring his appointment as Secretary of the Interior. After convincing the Navy Department to grant him control of the Teapot Dome oil fields in Wyoming, Fall leased them to the Sinclair Oil Corporation at rock-bottom prices. As a result, Fall's wealth mysteriously skyrocketed, and he was able to pay off many debts on his ranch in New Mexico, but not before raising quite a few eyebrows in Washington circles.

9. Henry Cantwell Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture

Henry Cantwell Wallace lived on farms across Illinois and Iowa before joining the newspaper business, where he wrote from the perspective of a rural Republican. He was later educated at Iowa State Agricultural College (now Iowa State University), where he later returned to take up a teaching position. Throughout his career, Wallace remained devoted to agriculture by setting up 4-H programs across Iowa, starting the Iowa Farm Bureau, and promoting programs assisting

farmers against overproduction and price fluctuations following the Great War. Wallace is notable for actually working as a farmer and writing for various ranching and farming publications during his newspaper career, meaning he was one of the few truly qualified individuals to serve in the Harding Cabinet.

10. Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce

After graduating from Stanford University in 1895 and serving as a mining geologist, Herbert Hoover gained renown following American entry into the Great War, in which he became the nation's 'food czar' (or leader of the Food Administration). Although his campaign for President in 1920 fell flat, Hoover got along well enough with nominee Warren Harding to be appointed Secretary of Commerce. In this capacity, Hoover was viciously opposed to the Ohio Gang and all of its members: As a Quaker from Iowa, he resented the poker games and drinking parties thrown by Harding and his cronies and saw the Gang as a bad influence. Despite this, Hoover got along well with Harding and was a proficient administrator and confidante. A uniquely charismatic and active cabinet secretary, Hoover was known to newshounds as 'Secretary of Commerce and Undersecretary of all other departments' for his visibility.

11. James J. Davis, Secretary of Labor

James J. Davies immigrated from Wales at the age of eight and settled in Pennsylvania, where he worked in a steel mill before holding minor political offices in Indiana. His work in the steel industry granted him unique insight into labor affairs: He supported the right of workers to strike and opposed the 14-hour workday that was the norm in American industry. Despite being an immigrant himself, Davis hated immigrants and worked to curtail entries from South and Eastern Europe during his tenure as Labor Secretary*. He was also involved in labor movements in Canada and Britain, meaning he was well connected to the apparatuses of several large nations.

*James J. Davis was a supporter of the eugenics movement. While the delegate assuming this role is still allowed to take a general anti-immigration stance, endorsements of eugenics will not be tolerated under any circumstances and operate under a one-strike policy.

12. Frederick H. Gillett, Speaker of the House of Representatives

Frederick H. Gillett started his political career in 1879, serving as Assistant Attorney General in his home state of Massachusetts until 1882. After serving two terms in the State House of Representatives, Gillett won election to Congress in 1892 and served in this capacity for over thirty years. He was elected Speaker of the House in 1919, and his reign was notable for the

rather lax notion of control: His two predecessors had ruled their party and legislature with an iron fist, but Gillet was content to allow members of his party to act and vote as they saw fit. This attitude extended to his personal life, as Gillett supposedly liked spending his free time golfing and driving a Pontiac Coupe around Washington, D.C.

13. Henry Cabot Lodge, Senate Majority Leader (unofficial)

Patriarch of the Lodge Political Family, Henry Cabot Lodge acted as the de facto Senate Majority Leader. Well known for his efforts to protect African-American voting rights, Lodge was also a leading authority on foreign relations and vehemently opposed the creation of the League of Nations. In doing so, he both earned the ire of Democrats and influenced the future structure of the United Nations. In addition to this, Lodge also supported increasing American intervention on the world stage, but was heavily anti-immigrant.

14. John Pierpont Morgan, Jr., Head of J.P. Morgan and Co.

J.P. Morgan, Jr. (not to be confused with his father, the original J.P. Morgan) took over the fortune and ownership of J.P. Morgan and Co. in 1913. His fortune grew during the Great War, and by 1920 was one of the richest men in the world. His wealth was only matched by his shrewd business and political acumen, especially concerning the Great War: Morgan became Britain's chief purchasing agent of American goods and earned a 1% commission on all sales he orchestrated (totaling 30 million dollars in 1920, or about 415 million dollars in 2021). This helped Morgan cultivate countless business and political connections across the globe.

15. John D. Rockefeller, Head of Standard Oil

John D. Rockefeller was rich enough to make all the other businessmen on this character list look like children running a lemonade stand. Considered to be the wealthiest American of all time, Rockefeller's Standard Oil controlled up to 90% of the oil in the country at its peak and made him the nation's first billionaire. All told, at one point his fortune was worth nearly 2% of the nation's economy. Even after an anti-trust lawsuit broke up Standard Oil in 1913, his wealth skyrocketed as all of his various businesses became greater than the sum of their parts. However, Rockefeller also made an imprint on the world through his philanthropy: He founded multiple colleges, helped eradicate hookworm and yellow fever from the United States, and established countless charitable organizations to improve the quality of life of millions of people.

16. Ida Tarbell, Author, Investigative Journalist, Muckraker

Ida Tarbell is considered to be one of the best investigative journalists of all time. Gutsy, gritty, and fearless, Tarbell used her status as a 'muckraker' to take on all comers. Her investigative expose of Rockefeller's Standard Oil, titled *The History Of The Standard Oil Company*, contributed to the breakup of Standard Oil in 1913, multiple anti-trust laws, and the creation of the Federal Trade Commission. Known for being able to take complex topics and simplify them into something more digestible for the average citizen, Tarbell was wildly popular across the nation and went on multiple speaking tours to talk about war, women's issues, anti-trust legislation, and her other endeavors. Although Ida Tarbell was not the first person to notice the Harding Administration's potential for corruption, she is certainly the most formidable opponent. If Harding and the Ohio Gang slip up, Tarbell will be on the case.

17. William Randolph Hearst, Yellow Journalist

If Ida Tarbell was known for her integrity, William Randolph Hearst was known for his lack thereof. Hearst specialized in 'yellow journalism', meaning he relied on sensationalist stories of sex, crime, and innuendo to sell papers. This worked like a charm, and before long Hearst had an empire of nearly 30 papers in major American cities at its peak. Such was his control over public sentiment that Hearst claimed credit for the start of the Spanish-American War in 1898 due to his embellishment of Spanish atrocities in Cuba and the Philippines. Hearst also served several terms in Congress in the early 1900s as a staunch progressive but had drifted to the right by the time of Harding's election. If Ida Tarbell can bring down Harding with her honesty, Hearst can likely do the same through his proliferation of yellow journalism through his empire.

18. W.E.B DuBois, Civil Rights Icon, founder of the NAACP

Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, W.E.B DuBois put himself on the map as a member of the Niagara movement demanding civil rights for African Americans. He parlayed this experience into further renown by becoming a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1907. DuBois was a high-profile opponent of lynching, Jim Crow laws, and various kinds of employment and education discrimination. DuBois is also noteworthy due to how wide he cast his net, as Asians and Africans living in foreign colonies were invited to join his endeavors and he helped form several Pan-African Congresses to move Africa toward independence. Despite the end of slavery two generations ago and the granting of new rights, life for African Americans is still rough in every portion of the United States. DuBois must use his lobbying power and connections to fight for his people.

19. Eugene V. Debs, Socialist

After spending his early career as a Democrat in middling political positions, Eugene V. Debs made his name as a labor organizer. After founding several labor unions, including the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Debs led several labor strikes in the railroad industry, culminating in the Pullman Strike of 1894. Debs's strike, which involved over 250,000 workers in 27 states, was a rousing success... until President Grover Cleveland sent the Army in to arrest Debs. Debs emerged from prison as an avid socialist and ran for the presidency five times under the Socialist Party banner: in 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912, and against Harding in 1920, where he ran his campaign from a jail cell after being arrested. Now that Debs is free again, he has to take another stand on the behalf of his fellow Socialists and workers everywhere.

20. Alice Paul, Suffragette

Although American, Alice Paul became involved with the British suffrage movement in the early 1900s. After being arrested seven times for her protests, she moved back to the United States and returned to work as an avid suffragette. An expert organizer, Paul arranged the 1913 Woman Suffrage Procession through Washington, D.C. Even after the march devolved into a riot, Paul pressed on; like with Martin Luther King, Jr. decades later, Paul's nonviolent reaction to abuse won over the court of public opinion. Despite being arrested several more times and enduring horrific prison conditions that could be constituted as human rights abuses in the modern-day, Paul got to watch the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. As a suffragette, Alice Paul endured beatings, arrests, jail sentences, riots, and hunger strikes in her pursuit of a better world for women everywhere. However, she knows that her revolution has just begun.

21. Florence Harding, First Lady of the United States

Following her marriage to Warren Harding in 1890, Florence Harding was the driving force behind many of her husband's achievements. When Harding entered journalism in the 1890s, she ran his newspaper; when he decided to run for State Senate in 1899, it was on her encouragement; when he eventually won, she had managed his campaign. Such as her role in Harding's success that Warren himself supposedly called her 'the boss'. Harding repaid her for her neverending support by having multiple affairs; Florence found out about them in 1911 but stayed with Harding. Through the 1910s and the Great War, Florence was active in her community and Warren's career, even helping to run his presidential campaign. But as Harding took office and his campaign weathered an extortion attempt by one of his spurned lovers, Florence's mood may have begun to sour. Perhaps it was time for Florence to use her talents to make a name for herself, rather than her husband.